Skylark



This issue of *SKYLARK*
is dedicated
to the memory
of

John C. Carlisle

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CRUMPLED PAPERS

There are poems in the street.
The autumn trees are full of them.
Flaming oranges and reds.
Brilliant fall colors.

There are poems in my head.
But they will not come out.
I know they are in there,
I hear them whispering to me in my sleep.

There are poems in my typewriter.
But my fingers must be broken,
Or numb at the tips.
If only I could bend them.

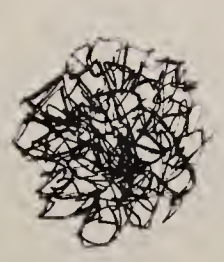
I concentrate,
But the pile of crumpled papers
Is getting deeper
At my feet.

—Chris Mauch
Merrillville, Indiana



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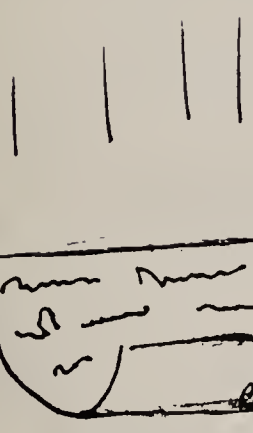
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INVESTING IN INCUNABULA



Lamplight folds night back
like a black crepe cuff.
Against paper, a marble
wrist weighs heavily.
Cold air thins
the curl of ink.

The writer lifts
down each thought
as if it were a Winesap
ready to be winter-wrapped.
Nearby, the back door
window protects the dark
in a box of stars.



Boiling behind
a reef of doubt,
ideas swell
only as high as the masts
of a bottled brig.
Netting girds
the curve of glass.

But before fingers
bunch this square
of vellum
into winter sun,
the eye reads the page
once more—
and discovers
no more than
a smudge
of illumination.

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A MEAL

WITH

OUR MENTOR



Rhede Rhodes

In her long, quilted, powder blue robe,
she greets us with professorial elegance,
uttering purist English
colored with colloquialisms.
She offers us sherry
and news of her Gilbert biography
researched on hundreds of 4x6 cards
and typed on an old "manual,"
her narrow fingers
transmitting strength and scholarship
to 400 pages of white bond—
a 4-year vigil: energy displaced
from 40 years of teaching and grading
and endless reassurances
to diligent ones like us
who feared yet revered
"Miss Stedman."

"Jane" (as we call her now)
invites us to the dining room,
serves muffins, cheddar quiche on romaine,
lemon meringue for dessert.
She talks with us of Johnson and Dryden,
Wordsworth and Pope,
her lilting voice like fine crystal,
her smile an heirloom
that does not lose its lustre.

It is her eyes we seek, though,
chestnut brown, enriched
from thousands and thousands of printed pages
and 74 years of vision;
soft eyes that seek our earnest faces,
eyes that still bestow the affirmation.



George returns, then, from the library,
diffusing excitement,
an anecdote this time about William Morris.
Jane laughs, and their eyes
feed upon each other,
one intellect long nurtured by the other,
generous portions passed back and forth
on bone china.

Fully sated now, we rise.
They stand together, holding hands,
smiling farewells,
Jane in her long, quilted robe,
powder blue to match her husband's eyes.

—Sandra Goldsmith
Chicago, Illinois



Photo courtesy of Purdue University Calumet Office of University Relations

TO THE READER

I am once again pleased to be able to extend my congratulations to the contributors and the staff of the *Skylark* for a job exceedingly well done. For a magazine such as the *Skylark* to continue to maintain its high level of quality year after year for more than two decades speaks well of those who had the initial vision of quality for a collegiate literary magazine. It speaks well to the determination and perseverance of those who have labored—with love—to produce year after year this magazine that rings true with the gold coin of quality composition.

During this, our golden anniversary year, we are reminded that the *Skylark* has been an integral part of the Purdue University Calumet campus for well more than half of the fifty years of this campus's existence. When another fifty years pass and Purdue Calumet celebrates its centennial, I am sure that when the history of its first one hundred years is written, the *Skylark* will be noted as an enduring symbol of this university's culture of quality.

JAMES YACKEL
Chancellor

A FIRE INSIDE

by Sam Huston



Photo courtesy of author

The physical entirety of my mother's life is contained in three plastic bags and a carry-on suitcase. I packed these bags on the bed she died in. It was a hospital bed in a nursing home, but the homemade quilt Mom kept on it had always made it seem less institutional. Now it was stripped bare, down to the plastic mattress cover. As I went through her belongings, I could hear residents (patients? clients? whatever euphemism this place uses) talking as they walked, hobbled or wheeled past the partly-closed door. I heard my mother's name repeated by different voices: "Nettie's gone." "Did you hear about Nettie?" "...quite a surprise..." "good way to go, though..." "...poor Nettie..."

Mom and Dad and I lived in the same house for fifteen years, accumulating the usual huge amount of stuff that most families have. When Dad retired, they moved to an apartment that didn't have much storage space. After he died, Mom moved into the nursing home. Each move meant less room for keepsakes, harder choices. What does someone keep for all that time? What's in these four containers?

There's a two-foot plastic Christmas tree. A nurse would make sure it was on the night stand in time for the holiday; Mom lost track of the calendar. Lots of stuff from the Lutheran church: synod newsletters, prayer books, Sunday bulletins from when she could get to church, a crayon-drawn poster from a second-grade Sunday-school class. Tourist brochures from trips with Dad. A friend's obituary, carefully clipped from the newspaper. And cards. Literally hundreds of birthday cards, Christmas, Mother's Day...

Scattered throughout the bags are spiral music notebooks filled with my mother's bulbous notations—transcriptions from instrumental music, and transpositions for soloists, all marked with the singer's name, the tempo and dynamics, interpretive notes, organ stop settings... all the things that inject music with emotion—with fire—Mom would say. I know these names. Often the singer is listed as "J.O."—my dad. I can track the changes in his voice as he ages; his range gets narrower and higher.

In the suitcase, a treasure trove: two bibles, pictures of my kids, homemade cards from them, a photo of Mom at Mt. Rushmore, one of those family-portrait Christmas cards from the 50s, my parents' wedding picture, and music—tons of music, all kinds of music. Sheet music, popular music from the 30s and 40s. Caroling books that resurrect memories of crystal-cold starry nights, warm cars, warm houses and, for me, hot chocolate (and the occasional thimbleful of schnapps).

And in a manila folder that's getting soft with age, old sheets of music. *Very* old—they are yellowing and torn, repaired in places with the old kind of Scotch tape that eventually turns waxy and stiff. It's the "cue sheet" for a silent movie: Samuel Goldwyn presents Ronald Coleman and Vilma Banky in *Two Lovers,* a United Artists Picture.

My God, how old is this? Looking for some kind of date, I have to pick the paper up gently to keep from ripping it further; I hold it sandwiched between my hands to turn it over. Holding one piece edgewise, I notice that it is actually two pages stuck together. I'm almost afraid to pry them apart. These pages have been torn in the same place and pressed together for God knows how many years. They come apart with a soft crackle. This must be very good stock; the finish is still smooth. Anything cheaper would probably have disintegrated by now.

I'm looking for copyright dates, scanning the pages, and I'm starting to figure out how theater organists like Mom used this. She had to match the action and titles on the screen to cues on the page. (Action: Drawbridge down—Leonora falls to floor exhausted... Title: Can there be happiness without love?... Must have been a terrific melodrama in its day.) Each cue has a line of music and a note for how long to play. There's only one line of music for each cue—if she had to play for more than a few seconds, Mom had to either know the music by heart or have the rest of it ready to read.

It was a pretty demanding job, but she told me over and over how much she loved it.

The latest copyright I can find is 1928. Why did she keep this all these years? Is there... was there something special about this particular movie? 1928... was it perhaps one of the last pictures she played for? *The* last? As often as she told me how much she loved theater organ, she told me how crushed she was when it died. Those were the words she used: crushed, died. She had thought she could spend the rest of her professional life piquing audiences' emotions, underscoring what the screen was making them feel. "Feeding the fire," she called it. That's what she loved about music—its inner fire, its emotion. Once when I was a kid I said something about music being feelings you could hear, and she gave me a warm, knowing smile and said softly, "Now you've got it."

In 1928 she was 23 years old and suddenly without a profession. The fire, the need to make music, was still there—with no outlet. She channeled all that passion into church music.

"With feeling"—I must have heard that phrase a hundred times at her funeral as people told me how they enjoyed her playing. How listening to her always made them *feel* something. Not all of them knew the work it took to create that feeling. She approached church organ with the same professionalism and sweat she had applied to the theater.

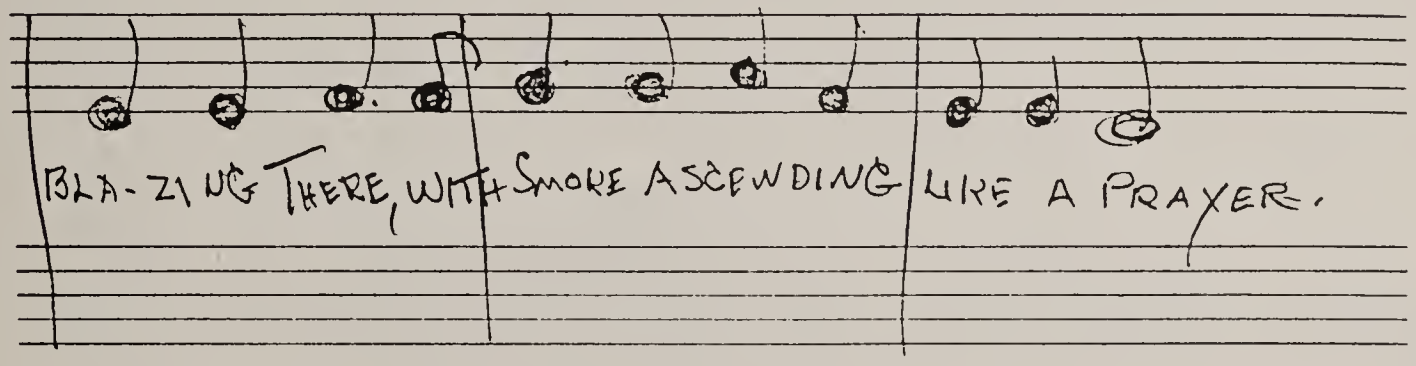
On the old, yellowed pages of music in the suitcase, I can see her work. Pick up any piece, and it's covered with her scribbled notations. Here is *Prelude and Fugue in D Minor.* Its pages are only slightly less distressed than the cue sheet. Notes are circled for emphasis. Different colors of pencil and pen markings attest to years of changing interpretations. One place where she extended a crescendo in blue pen has NO scrawled across it in red pencil. I love this rushed handwriting —stop settings and dynamics scribbled in the heat of passion, the musician's sweet struggle to *get it right.* I can hear again a chord echoing in the old church, and Mom's disgusted "Hm!" The soft "thp thp thp" of stops being pulled, the same chord, and this time a merely indifferent "Hm." More stops, the chord again, and a fiercely triumphant "Mm-HM!" and the quick soft scribble of a pencil. And here it is, the mark on the page. I can reach out to her, and across the years, and touch this mark that expresses emotion. It makes a smudge on my finger.

Listening to her practice started the fire in me. When I was too young for school, I would go along with her when she practiced at church. While she played, I explored. One day I heard her music coming from behind a wall. I touched the wall. It vibrated when the music played. The music seemed loudest at a wooden panel. When I touched that, it moved, and the music got louder still. Hardly daring to breathe, I pushed the panel open.

Magic.

It was dark in there, a huge dark space filled with glorious sound. The music seemed to pulse through the opening in the wall. I had to get closer; I crawled in. Dim, tall, crowded shapes surrounded me, and music engulfed me. I was amongst the pipes of the organ. The music was a physical thing; it pushed at my body, buffeted me, swirled around me, slammed through me. The floor vibrated, the air vibrated, I felt the vibration in my core. I was *in* music, physically a part of it. And the flame ignited. A composer, long dead, had once felt joy and expressed it in sound, and written it down for others to play and hear, and so to feel. And my mother was reading what he had written, transforming it back into sound, subtly working and shaping it to her own feeling of joy. That joy, that music, was roaring out of these pipes and into my soul to start a fire that has never gone out.

Starting in the top left corner of this sheet of music, and filling the top of the page, surrounding the title, Mom noted the dates she performed this piece. The first date has been smeared past recognition, but the year is 1939. Eleven years after technology made her career obsolete, she was still feeding the fire. The last date is September 14, 1980. By then it hurt her feet to move quickly over the pedals, but the fire inside would not let her stop, not until she knew she could no longer do justice to a composer's vision.



I've heard it called other things: the creative urge, an artistic soul. Mom said it was a fire inside, a drive that won't let you *not* create. The fire never dies.

Sam Huston lives in Gary, Indiana.

FIRE

Gordon Stamper
Editor



Photo by Katie Bushby

A charred, injured door
no longer keeps out the night
its blackness rivered
with carbon-powdered cracks
amidst the desolation

–Katie Bushby
Glenwood, Illinois

Stephen Hawking: Over Order

This season's little first fire pulls
my body to it, like a missile of crashing gravity
headlonging into black hole.
Its silent coals now offer nothing
as dramatic as a burning scorch,
only flick and wink of ash
in and outing orangeglow.
I think of Hawking
roaring through Oxford
in his youth, a thundering
lightning bolt of intellect, taking
it all for granted,
just as I played through the wood
on this fire, and now enjoy
its pool of ordered warmth
more than its once wild
flames,
while Stephen Hawking tends
and stokes the universe,
from his unassuming chair, still point,
in his tiny body, one finger
over all that order.

—Judith Johnstone
Memphis, Tennessee

India Your Blazing

India, your blazing
palette pulsates over bodies
of women in saris.
Cotton and silk
the color of passion
shock our sleeping
Western minds.

What is this fire
in your heart, India? This heat
of compost everywhere,
these burning bodies of the dead
filling the air
with ochre smoke,
this hunger smoldering
through generations.

Your black-haired children,
whose cries scorch the night
while we sweat in our beds,
crowd around us in the streets
by day, their hands
outstretched as if to say–
Baba, pull me from these flames.
It's enough to burn our own
pale complaints to ashes.

—Kathy Conde
Madrid, Spain

My Freedom

And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires.
—William Blake, "The Garden of Love"

The church entombed my fresh body.
Struggling in a leathery pouch of old wineskin,
My protest, merely a muted gurgling
Or a voice indiscernible, hollow, thin.
I acquiesced, and reduced to burbling
The liquid indoctrination within,
I felt the room vibrate with the twirling
Of converts in wineskins making a din.

One night someone rent the pouch open,
And it was a sweet muse,
Cloaked in uncertain shadow.
She gave me no answers
She burned my mind

She took me to the shaded places
Shadowy regions
There was no iniquity
And then I burned again
consuming fire sweet to the smell
tangling forms in darkness
transmogrifying me
deforming me
molding my pliable flesh
caressing me
finishing me

no righteous god here
to castigate
i am free
to express
my heart
my feelings
of religious
of righteous
of pagan
of phallic
dismay

—Gordon Stamper
Griffith, Indiana



Photo courtesy of the Town of Munster Fire Department
Munster, Indiana

Dial 911!

All of my life, the forest fires of anger
Raged out of control in my heart and soul.
They came close to destroying everything in my world,
If not by the flames themselves,
Then by the thick black smoke and toxic fumes
That resulted from the combustion.
The effects spread through all of my life,
Causing everyone to gasp and choke,
And eyes to redden and run.
I tried every way I could think of
To extinguish the blaze,
And would have settled just for containing it.
For a while, it would seem as if I were making some progress,
But as flames in one area died down,
Others, unattended, grew in force and fury.
I had no choice but to admit defeat.
I was helpless, despite my efforts
With garden hose, bucket of sand, and hand-held extinguisher.
So I dialed 911 and told the operator,
"I've got an emergency situation here . . .
A fire out of control!
Send help quick!"

In a heartbeat, the Fire Department arrived on the scene.
Funny, though, they only sent One Guy,
Racing up in a red pick-up truck.
He hopped out,
And I was flabbergasted!
He wasn't equipped for the job!
He wore jeans, a plaid shirt and sneakers.
The only sign that He was a member of the Fire Department
Was the red helmet on His head,
With a big, white number 1 on it.
Where was His protective gear?
Rubber boots, and breathing apparatus?
Hatchet and miles of hose?
He seemed to read my mind.
"Don't worry," He said,
"I'll take care of everything."
And with that, He strode fearlessly into the flames.
In an instant, the fire was out!
It was miraculous!

My relief was overwhelming.
I hadn't realized how exhausted I had become
Trying to fight it alone.
I tried to express my gratitude,
But words failed me.

I couldn't help but notice though . . .
There were still a lot of glowing embers on the ground.
I was afraid they would flare up
And start the conflagration all over again.
"Wait!" I cried, as He climbed back into His truck.
"These embers . . . what if they burst into flames?"
"No problem," He answered.
"Just call; I'll come running."
And with that, He sped away.

That didn't make sense to me.
Wouldn't it have been more practical
To be sure everything was safely out before He left?
Wouldn't He rather be done with me, once and for all?

Hmmm . . . guess not.

—Linda Planer
Crown Point, Indiana

BURNING A SNAPSHOT OF KATE CANTRELL

by Richard McNally

Phillip Sellica isn't ultra anymore, he doesn't have it in him, he's beginning to have the air of a stubbed-out cigarette, his head limps, and his visions have become visions of food and women. Watch him walk down Parker Street thinking about his students—see how his head limps? Where is it now, the glory and the dream? Watch him pour boiling water into the glass coffee cup on the stove—see? He is unquestionably becoming addicted to stimulating beverages. Watch him stamp out a forest fire with Kate Cantrell, holding her by the ankles and banging her forehead against the flaming underbush—*whomp! whomp!* Listen to him daydreaming about *coq au vin,* hear his jaws snapping as he tries to get some work done in the main reading room—*snack! snack!* What is he to become, a pair of plastic wind-up jaws clattering *clackatta! clackatta! clackatta!* across the glass coffee tables of the world? Fill a grocery bag with the stuff of his daydreams—scallions, bras, feta cheese, skirts, scallops, and mascara. And two dozen pairs of Kate Cantrell's incomparable bikini panties, ranging from pale apricot, lemon and flesh tints through swirling prints and neat stripes to purest, skimpiest black. But that comment she made. He falls upon the thorns of life, he bleeds! Watch the thin stream of smoke rise from his heart and seep out through the hair on the back of his skull, smell the fumes—*sniff! sniff!* Go ahead, take a good whiff, how often is it one gets a chance to smell a twenty-eight-year-old assistant professor burning? To his students, he is a super nova turning into a black hole; to the chair of his department, a scholar turning into a scoffer. And to himself? To himself he is a man in need of a trip abroad and a new suit. An example of a first-degree burn would be sunburn—the skin is merely reddened. In the case of a second-degree burn, blisters form on the surface of the wound. It is April and unseasonably warm. Phillip is walking down Ware Street on his way to Stonecroft's, a small shop on Bantry Avenue that carries a limited selection of pretentious, over priced, moderately popular men's clothing. The sunlight makes him feel better and the thought of buying a new suit is a definite updraft. Arriving at Stonecroft's, he pauses to study the display in the front window, tugging at his moustache, then regards his reflection in the glass—the high forehead and prematurely thinning hair (compensated for by the tangle of twisted strands hanging down the back of his neck), the tiny noncommittal eyes, the jowly jawline: not a charming face, but not a repellent one either; "agreeably disappointing" is the way he characterizes it in private. As for physique, he is running to paunchy, but any day now is going to start on a strict diet. Inside the store a salesman is paging through a newspaper lying on a counter. Next to him is the cash register, an old black National with wrought-iron scrollwork decorating the sides and large typewriter-style keys. He is a man in his fifties with a blotchy complexion and a large,cratered nose. At the sight of Phillip he straightens up and assumes a half-smile. As they exchange greetings and shake hands, the salesman's smile expands—but Phillip knows what's smoldering inside the dark-striped, three-piece suit with the red silk handkerchief in the heart pocket. It's good to see you, Mr. Sellica, says a salesman, laughing. Good to see you, Tony, says Phillip. Tony keeps pumping his hand. Phillip knows Tony carries live coals in his pockets, prepared, like most members of his class, to grind them, at the slightest provocation, into his own face. Phillip thinks, *It's fear of self-immolation that keeps them down, fear of setting their eyebrows on fire, burning holes in their cheeks.* Phillip pulls his hand loose and says, I'm going on a trip. Excellent, excellent, what can I show you? says Tony, his eyes exophthalmic to the point they appear ready to burst, the network of red lines across the whites unusually dense. I think I'll just have a look around, says Phillip. Sure, take your time, take your time, says Tony, going back to his post next to the cash register and turning the page of his paper. Phillip moves past Necco-like stacks of pastel-colored dress shirts and stops at a narrow wooden display stand in which neckties hang over a series of tiered horizontal bars. He likes the way the ties look without knots and feels one between his fingers—silk. Crossing the store, he takes a light gray tropical worsted in size 42 regular off the rack and holds it at arm's length. Then he feels the lapel—a bit rough to the touch. He hangs the suit back on the rack and moves toward the front of the store, passing a rack of raincoats lined up like commuters waiting for a promotion, then a smaller one offering belts hanging by their buckles. Pausing in front of a display case containing striped shirts with white collars, he puts the palm of his right hand against the glass and absorbs its coolness and perfect smoothness. In the third-degree, or full-thickness burn, all layers of a person's skin are destroyed, including the epidermis, corium and uppermost layer of body fat. A burn of the fourth degree involves the burning of muscle and internal organs. When a person's bones and joints burn, the condition is referred to as char. Phillip steps out of the changing booth and

When a person's bones and joints burn, the condition is referred to as char.

looks at himself in the three-panel mirror. For a suit off the rack it is surprisingly well-shaped, but the pleated slacks, which he is just able to join at the waist, feel terribly rough, the wool fibers prickling the skin up and down his legs and making him think of a book he once saw in a display case at the Museum of Modern Art—it lay flat on its side and from between the pages scores of pins stuck out in all directions along with the blades of a pair of scizzors closed so tightly on the edges of a razor blade that it (the razor) was bending, a work of art that made his teeth curl every time he thought of it. Looking in the mirror, he turns one way, then another. He likes the shade of gray. But when he looks away from the mirror, he becomes aware of how scratchy the trousers are. Sitting on a chair next to the mirror, he crosses his right leg over his left and the skin at the back of his right knee prickles unbearably—they are out of the question. He has wasted enough money on unwearable slacks over the years to know that there are different grades of worsted wool, the best nearly as soft as cotton, the worst as horrid as this. He asks, Could these slacks be lined, Tony? Yes, says Tony. And how much would that cost? asks Phillip. For you, Mr. Sellica, there would be no charge, says Tony, bowing slightly, his hands clasped at his chest. I see, says Phillip, looking in the mirror again. They feel excessively rough to my skin. A polyester-and-cotton lining would transform them, says Tony, or perhaps you would prefer satin. Phillip turns from side to side, catching the back view by looking at the reflection of the right-hand mirror in the left-hand. He tugs at his moustache and says, I'm going to have to think it over. He has had slacks lined before and has not been completely satisfied because the lining made the slacks seem bulky and he had felt as if he had two pairs of trousers on. And the idea of having the slacks of a summer suit lined seems absurd. After leaving the shop he walks to the Junction and goes into Sid's and buys an apple for 65¢, its skin a deep, glowing red. He touches it to his cheek and rubs it gently back and forth as he walks toward Wheeler Street. Respiratory burns resulting from inhalation of smoke and air at excessive temperatures are generally considered grave, and the edema, or swelling, that follows usually requires a tracheotomy. They are walking rapidly in the direction of the Esplanade des Invalides, one a few steps ahead of the other, the one lagging behind carrying a large wicker pocketbook. I tell you, Giselle, says the one in front, a dark-haired young woman with flamingo legs in a tight skirt and sunglasses, The next man who so much as looks at me, I'm going to... I tell you... he's going to wish... The one in front suddenly stops and Giselle almost runs into her. The one in front says, You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to lure him in. Anyone! She turns abruptly and resumes walking. Giselle sets off after her, saying, Will you slow down, Monica? Phillip lies in the grass on his back, one leg bent at the knee. The sun is bright but intermittently hidden by clouds and he enjoys feeling the warmth come and go on his face. His thoughts return to the flight over, his first on the Concorde, during which he remarked that clouds look no different from above than from below. He closes his eyes. He is wearing khakis, a leather belt with a brass *P* for the buckle (the prong of which is in the last punch hole) and a long-sleeve shirt with a starched collar and cuffs. He has taken his loafers off, exposing his bare feet to the softness of the grass, and a sportscoat lies at his side. He has seventeen things on his mind: (1) increasing dissatisfaction with teaching, increasing fear of the chair of his department, (2) the feeling of the grass against the sole of his right foot as he brushes it back and forth, (3) is structuralism worth the trouble? what would Falstaff think of it? (4) how could he forget to pack the Dante? (5) if

Originality wounds everyone involved, voluptuously.

poetry is literature's ejaculation, its backbone is prose, (6) *boeuf bourguignon* in a sauce with bits of bacon and sliced mushrooms and pearl onions in it and a *salade nicoise,* (7) a bottle of *Chateau de Clairefont Margaux* red, (8) should he just drift away from Kate or, in view of her comment, give her the definitive denunciation she deserves and drop her like a hot brick? (9) should he query *Art News* with a proposal for an article on the extent to which Mondrian's concern with the ontology of art has influenced Christo, with particular reference to the Biscayne Bay project? (10) should he listen to what Arthur said about the Texaco shares, in view of the Pennzoil litigation? (11) Orton is intolerable—that laugh! (12) the scratchiness of the suit at Stonecroft's, (13) the sense of security he feels when reading Freud, (14) why this increasingly acute feeling that his life is on the wrong track? (15) Brando's whimper at the beginning of *Last Tango in Paris,* (16) originality wounds everyone involved, voluptuously, (17) images of Kate—sitting on the edge of his bed without clothes, then poised above him and locked into his gaze, then scowling across the table at him as they had breakfast earlier today, her eyes narrowed, her lips pressed together, infuriated that he was going without her. He is turning 8 around like a Rubic's cube, looking for a starting point, when 11 pushes it aside and takes his attention. After that 6 floats up through the image of 11 like a sixty-second photo developing before his eyes, but 11 doesn't fade and he is occupied with a sort of double exposure, resolving nothing. Then 1 comes rolling into the midst of things and knocks 6 and 11 aside like billiard balls. He stays with 1 for perhaps 30 seconds, resolving nothing, after which 10 and 12, which he is disinclined to deal with, flash into focus side by side—but within moments they begin to dissolve, succeeded by 8, which he finds irritating and appealing and frightening and which throws his thinking into slow motion. He tries to stay with it and make at least some progress toward a decision, but it is like trying to squash a drop of mercury with his fingertip. It is soon succeeded by a rapid sequence of 11, 16, 17, 4, 1 and 10, rolling across his consciousness like steel balls across the playing surface of a pinball machine. He tries to stop thinking altogether, turns to TM by humming a single, low-pitched tone in synchronicity with every other exhalation, and for a few moments succeeds in visualizing nothing but whiteness, the first step on the road to the colorlessness of nothingness. But soon a perverse point of black appears, no bigger than a period, and as it begins to swell he senses that it is 8 back for a third try. It swells steadily until it obliterates the whiteness altogether and all he can see is black and it seems to be a blackness of considerable depth, not flat like the whiteness—it is as if he were in the midst of a cloud of dense black smoke. But what the devil does this

have to do with Kate? A snapshot of her appears, then a snapshot of grass, then a motion picture close-up of grass that fills the whole of his interior field of vision, the blades alternately in shadow and sunlight. Then he is elevated for a crane shot, looking down at himself lying in the grass, and as the camera keeps rising he realizes it isn't a crane shot but an aerial. It is starting to get windy. He opens his eyes, rubs his face, sits up. It comes to him that *"OM"* and *"homme"* are the same sound and he makes a mental note to check the etymology in *Littre.* Looking out at the traffic passing on the Quai d'Orsay at the lower end of the park, he tugs at his moustache, then takes a billfold from the inner breast pocket of his sportscoat and slides out a snapshot. With the other hand he fishes a book of matches from the side pocket of the coat and tears one off and lights it and holds it to the corner of the snapshot but the wind immediately blows it out. He tries twice more, holding the edge of the snapshot between his teeth, cupping his hand around the match, but can't manage it. He puts the snapshot back in his billfold and slips the matches back into the pocket of his coat. Then he hears a blanket being shaken out nearby and smelling perfume turns to look. Skin grafts used in the treatment of severe burns are usually harvested by machine. The width of a graft can be increased two or three times by putting it through a machine that slits it into an expandable mesh. It's nearly four-thirty in the afternoon and there are only a few people in the park, most seated on the benches. How would this be? asks Giselle. Monica looks around and notices, near the wrought iron fence along the upper border of the park, some fifty feet away to her left , a man with a moustache lying on his back in the grass, a sportscoat stretched out next to him. I don't think I like it here, she says, let's try over this way. She heads in the direction of the man, who has sat up and is attempting to light a match. She stops not ten feet from where he is sitting. Giselle whispers, But we're right on top of this man. Monica holds out her hand, saying, Give me the blanket. Grafting new tissue onto the surface of an extensive burn ordinarily begins once the eschar, or dead skin, of the wound has separated from the healthy tissue underneath, usually within 25 to 40 days after the accident. Often after removing the dead tissue of very large burns, the surgeon finds there is not enough donor skin elsewhere on the patient's body to cover the exposed raw area. In these cases he must graft what he can, cover the remaining burns with temporary dressings, then await re-epithelization of the donor areas, a process which usually takes about three weeks, in order to reharvest additional grafts. If the grafts take, the patient recovers. Monica takes the blanket from Giselle and unfolds it and shakes it out over the grass. Phillip turns his head toward the noise and is surprised to see Giselle and

Skin grafts used in the treatment of severe burns are usually harvested by machine.

Monica so close. Before looking away he notices that Monica's eyebrows are drawn in with an eyebrow pencil. Giselle and Monica sit on the blanket and Giselle takes a bottle of white wine and two transparent plastic cups from her pocketbook and they have a drink. A while later Monica puts her empty cup down and takes a glass bottle of suntan oil from her pocketbook and, pulling her skirt midway up her thighs, begins stroking her legs with the oil. She keeps looking over at Phillip, who is now lying on his side, and says to Giselle, I'm dying for a shower. All I think about is water splashing down on my face and shoulders and getting all soaped up. Giselle says, I know. Monica says, There are thousands of buildings in this city with medieval water lines. Why does mine have to be singled out for disaster? Giselle says, Why does anything happen to anyone? The clouds are getting darker and moving more swiftly and the ground is beginning to feel hard to Phillip. He glances toward the women and finds Monica smiling at him. He looks away, and when he looks back, she has shifted her position slightly and pulled her skirt up a bit higher. He declines to return her smile and looks away again. *Slut,* he thinks, *but not without a certain charm.* What to do? Let himself go? He has no real commitments, not the way things now stand with Kate, not after that comment. But where will it take him? By the next day it will be as if...and he will feel misled...cheated...an experience of that intensity should lead ... but he knew it wouldn't... it would only disappear. But then again, he has nothing better to do. *I am open to all experience. I reject nothing, I shun nothing, I condemn nothing. All I ask of life is that it surrender everything to me. As a comparatist, I can hardly do less.* He falls back on a compromise he has used before in situations like this. *There's no need to decide anything in advance, I'll just go over and talk to her.* As he sits up again, it starts to rain and when he turns toward the women he sees them hurrying out of the park. The most common cause of death among individuals with very large burns is infection. Large burns are difficult to safeguard from this threat. Protective measures include the use of bandages soaked in a solution of silver nitrate; the application of a water-soluble ointment of mafenide to the surface of the wound; and temporary skin grafts from another person (usually a corpse) or from an animal. Ultimately the patient must be covered with grafts of his own skin, since that from other people or animals will eventually be rejected. Walking swiftly down the grassy slope, Phillip turns up the collar of his sportscoat and resists getting wet by hunching up his shoulders, tensing the back of his neck, and squeezing his nails into his palms. He worries how his tasseled loafers will take the drenching. Halfway down the slope he stops and turns in the direction the women took, but they are out of sight. Going out the gate in the spiked fence surrounding the park, he crosses the Quai d'Orsay and mounts the steps leading up to the stone and steel extravagance of the Pont Alexandre. Part way across he stops and, resting both palms on the stone wall along the edge, gazes at the water and scraps flowing downstream, thinking about 8 again. There is no point in hurrying, he is soaked to the skin. The stone wall is cold and rough to the touch but leaning on it makes him feel secure and he tilts further forward, his weight on his hands, watching a newspaper glide by. *How dare she speak to me like that?* A burn of the third or fourth degree causes little or no pain in the immediate area of the wound because the nerve endings are destroyed. A good deal of body fluid accumulates in the region—a person whose head and face have received extensive third-degree burns will experience considerable swelling and within twenty-four hours his or her head will be the size of a basketball, with the eyes completely

Fire

The flames reach higher
into the night.
The colors are forever changing.
A child stares silently,
enchanted by its existence,
longing to know its secret.

–Michelle Grubbs
Jacksonville, Florida



Illustration by Brian Hunter

squeezed shut. Once across the bridge, he walks to the Grand Palais and goes inside. He is glad to be in out of the rain but feels indecent, water dripping from the tip of his nose, the cuffs of his sportscoat, his fingertips. He wipes his face and, after shaking his hands at his sides, sets out across the marble floor, leaving a trail of footprints. As he is looking about he meets the eyes of a white-haired guard who is regarding him with pointed disapproval. Phillip looks away, and the final image of 17 comes to mind, followed by a discomforting recollection of the spectacle his appetite made at breakfast—two pan-size blueberry buttermilk pancakes, a Western omelet with fried potatoes, onions, and sausages, four slices of heavily-buttered pumpernickel toast, a large papaya juice, and God knows how many cups of coffee.*I've got to go on a diet.* The paintings on exhibit are uniformly illusionistic and though he is momentarily arrested by a superrealist oil depicting a nude woman walking down a deserted street in what appears to be the Faubourg-St. Germain, he is put off by the show as a whole. Stepping out into the rain, he feels cold and out of mood, hunching his shoulders, tensing his neck, pressing his nails into his palms again. At the traffic circle he glances in the direction of the punctured monolith, then turns right and starts down the blest boulevard. It is pouring and he can feel water running down his back. There is a green haze among the branches of the chestnut trees along the sidewalks and the uppermost are being whipped back and forth by the wind. Inside the park across the street he can see that both the donkey ride and the goat ride are closed.

The expenses involved in treating large burns exceed those of all other types of trauma or surgical event. Victims of large burns average the most prolonged hospital time of any injury, and for much of their hospitalization they are in constant pain. Phillip returns to his room at the Hotel de Brequigny and, after regarding himself in the mirror over the bureau, empties his pockets on the night table next to the bed and takes a hot bath. Relaxing in the tub, he knows there is something he planned to do upon returning but can't recall what. He gets out of the tub feeling drowsy and, after drying himself and slipping into a bathrobe, decides to have dinner sent up. He reads until the meal arrives, once again annoyed that he forgot to pack the Dante. The appetizer is *pate de veau,* with which he drinks a glass of dry white *Graves* which he pours from a small carafe. The *entree,* kept warm in a chafing dish, consists of roast pork glazed with a honey-mustard sauce, scalloped potatoes in a cream sauce, and peeled apple quarters baked in clarified butter. With this he consumes a half-bottle of his eternal *Chateau de Clairefont Margaux* red, the pork notwithstanding, and two *petits pains* served in a wicker basket. Dessert is compote of fresh peaches with raspberry *puree,* served in a cut-crystal bowl with ladyfingers on the saucer, followed by a small pot of *cafe noir* kept piping hot over a flame. When he's finished, he takes the bathrobe off and gets into bed to rest for a bit before going out for the evening. The sheets feel wonderful against his skin and he can hear the wind driving the rain against the windows. 17 recurs but it is soon displaced by the image of a woman in the park pulling up her skirt and stroking her legs with oil. Then he remembers—the snapshot of Kate. Watch the photo burning in the ashtray on the night table next to the bed. Smell the fumes. See Phillip lie back against his pillows, gazing at the flames through partly-closed eyes. Watch his eyes close.

Richard McNally lives in
Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Fire Before Dawn

Struck by lightning and suddenly bold,
the calving barn on fire astounded a crowd
of local people gathering there who told
of branding iron heat reaching their houses
in spite of the rain and the winter night.
Shadows of fleeing bats flew like bad
dreams across the crowd's sleep–stained eyes.
Burning stacks of last year's hay splashed
the blood-colored sky with brilliant sparks,
shooting stars running before the sun.
Against the unbearable weight of the dark
night the blazing barn reared up
and plunged utterly unafraid
into the white flames alive with change.

—Kathy Conde
Madrid, Spain

The Faceless Flame

Squandering through
the evils of humanity
in pursuit of something
good and decent, where
the evolution of our species
can be programmed like a machine
instead of tempted like a heart

—Sara L. Holt
Nipomo, California



Flame Dragon
by
Sherry Herbst



Forest Fire

Dark clouds fill the sky
Huge raindrops pelt the earth
A flash sizzles through the air
Lightning topples a gnarled old oak

White-hot sparks ignite ancient timber
Kindles crumbly, rotted wood
A thin spiral of smoke rises
As a small blaze smolders, deeper within

Heavy storm clouds blow away
Suddenly, fire bursts forth
Devouring the dry, fallen trunk
Sparks fly brightly, searching for fuel

Flames flash through parched brush
Penetrating the dark forest
Unquenched, the inferno roars on
From bush to bush and tree to tree

Changing winds bring a steady drizzle
Soaking the smoking forest
Subdued by dampened undergrowth
The fire burns down

Standing trees are charred and black
Weeds and grass have disappeared
Useless debris is cleared away
Healing the forest for new growth

—Laura Ruben
Hammond, Indiana

COMBUSTION

It is dusk, the blanketing creed campers use to put away their daytime. Like closing my eyes dilates my sense of self, the darkness will expand my dimensions.

The furrowed eyebrows and puckered mouth confirm his concentration and incite me to agitate the coals of my world. He is building a wigwam of twigs. I am tearing down walls. Are we rekindling the caveman/woman approach to a campfire, I wonder? He controls the construction, but I am mistress of the caldron.

My lawn chair is set close enough to this center-ring attraction to mesmerize me by its magic. With only slight crackling and a few sparks, the change is hardly visible. How like my life!

I appear the same, yet I have changed in ways that only I see because there's been little crackle and few flying sparks. The difference is within, where it always seems to be when I am basking in the freedom to be me. Suddenly, the flames shoot up, firing my spirit and transforming me with their splash of color.

My eyes follow their flickering ascent and suddenly specks of silver wink at me. I look down again at the bonfire. Up and down until I capture the connection between the physical and spiritual parts of me. Looking around, I can see that same fuse transmitting to others' campfires. We are sharing each other's space, singly ablaze with what absorbs us, yet fueled by our common need for human warmth.

The fire speaks loudly. I sense my self-awareness is melting so I squirm to find a more comfortable position. Am I too afraid of getting burned to get closer?

Fran Smolen lives in
Highland, Indiana.

Purification

My mettle ways
were purified
in a fireball
from Heaven
refining me
from the houses
of the caged birds
fat, deceitful, sleek
I would rather be
homeless
and as I dressed
my wounds
knowing
they were serious
the reflection
in the blood
on my fingers
glistened
and I know
of existence
and the
rhetorical purpose
shifted
from manipulation
to exploration
of the greater meaning
read in the ashes
like tea leaves
and I feel
cold as steel.

—Sherry Berntsen
Lake Station, Indiana

The Scorch

Our fire beckons with warmth and light.
Do you see it there between the trees?
Let's run to it–or walk, as you wish.

We dance around flames mindful
of the Scorch we measure its
boundaries with care
and deliberation.

We savor the heat.
Licked by ruddy tongues,
mindless, cheeks flushed with flame,
arms around waists we enter the blaze.
No firewalkers we
bathe in embers.

And we are left whole–
Until the fire passes on,
until you move on
and a thin, cooling autumn wind
stirs the ashes of my heart.

—Reinhard K. Fritz
Hammond, Indiana

Stars

From the center, where the galaxy swirls:
stars flung on the void as splendid snowflakes. . .
God's own baubles, treasured ancient keepsakes:
rubies, sapphires, and opalescent pearls. . .
each a beating heart, each a living soul,
spiral-dancing their infinite turning,
giving up their essence in the burning
that's ordained: "Do *this*, and Ye shall be whole,
Ye shall be as Gods, as shining spindles;
and from Thy body shall be spun a thread
destined to fill the firmament with dread. . .
and magnificence; for what Ye kindle
in Thy sacrifice, shall be unending;
yea, Thy filament shall be a tapestry,
mysterious, woven of ecstasy,
and none gainsay the why of its wending.
Lift up Thy voice in myriad choir;
be Thou Creation's Hand; be Thou . . . FIRE!"

—J. R. Wesdorp
Saugerties, New York



Photos by Pamela Hunter



Photo by John Carlisle

The Burning House

The windows burst.
The house winces
with sudden blindness.
Smoke hurtles itself
out the window,
while, right behind,
fire makes more of it.

Children dance in the
gaps in my grief
to the music
of brilliant orange eyes.
Teenagers gawk,
cruise the flame
as it eats away
half of what I know.
A married couple
play my parents for an instant,
their sympathy coming along nicely
like a tulip bed,
almost blooming
the moment they move on.
The older ones stand by me,
find pleasure in tears.

My record collection.
The books my older sister
seeded in me years before.
The photographs
that stitched past years together.
All swept up by the heat.

Luckily, no one was home
at the time,
no one dies.
But if there is a fortunate escape,
a child dragged away from falling roof
by broad-armed fireman,
it's memory,
the thing these rooms did best,
sealing a moment in its wallpaper,
in linoleum cracks,
now, unsurprisingly,
freed by hell,
able to breathe without its life support,
in my head,
stunned by how unfamiliar
the familiar can get,
gratified you can't torch time.

—John Grey
Providence, Rhode Island

Tap Soft the Sill

I lie before the hearth alone
As winter winds touch the frosted pane
Leaving crystal prism trails
To dance, alive, from fire's light.

Gentle fire tongues a gnarled log,
And tender tossed branches, tap soft the sill,
While in the sizzling sparks, I see,
Two lovers in the fire entwined.

Through our curtained eyes, the world ignored,
Two silent sparks, our souls lie bare.
As embers burn, we join as one.
Tender hold my heart, my guardian of the dark

Cloaked only in our arms, two breaths as one.
Before the hearth, we, still, silent lovers lie,
With legs entwined in lover's lock; we thirst as if to say. . .
Hold back the day; hold onto the night!

Alone I sit, the hearth now shivers, cold as I. . .
Soft tears have washed the fire out,
Leaving trails alone, to mar the powder ash
As tender tossed branches, tap soft the sill. . .

—Bob Stickley
Hammond, Indiana

Purgatory

Three days after his death
She sweats in fitful sleep and dreams of him
Peering over the edge into Earth's core
She sees his pleading and tortured face
Screaming in the blinding white heat

Three days after his death
She walks in the summer rain and hears his call
Beckoning to her like Dives unto Lazarus
She feels her tears fall onto the steaming street
Surrounding her with a vapor of grief

Three days after his death
She returns to the church and promises of mercy
Remembering the priest's words of cool green pastures
She senses his cries that echo through the nave
Dropping her quarters in the small metal box
She prays that his suffering will be extinguished
By the silence of the candle

—Donna Wisthoff Wachter
Cedar Lake, Indiana

Souvenir

You threw gasoline
in the fire
and my self-confidence
burned away.
But then I remembered
to stop, drop, and roll . . .

And I was left
with a Scar.
It is tough,
a tough spot
in my softness,
the only remembrance
I didn't throw away.

—Kristin Jensen
Crete, Illinois

Fire in their eyes

Sometimes when you least expect it
they leave.
You don't know why,
they just do.
You're going to have to say good-bye.
You're not sure if they will hear you,
you hope they do.
Wherever they are,
you just hope they hear you.

Their memory is vivid,
strong in the mind.
You take mental pictures with you
wherever you go.

You remember all the things about them,
their strength, character, heart,
the sparks in their soul.
All the fire still burns with you.

They leave you,
and you'll miss them as long as you walk.
But for now you must go on
the best way you can.
So you shut off the lights,
leave the room,
and whisper good-bye.

—Vincent Ortega
East Chicago, Indiana

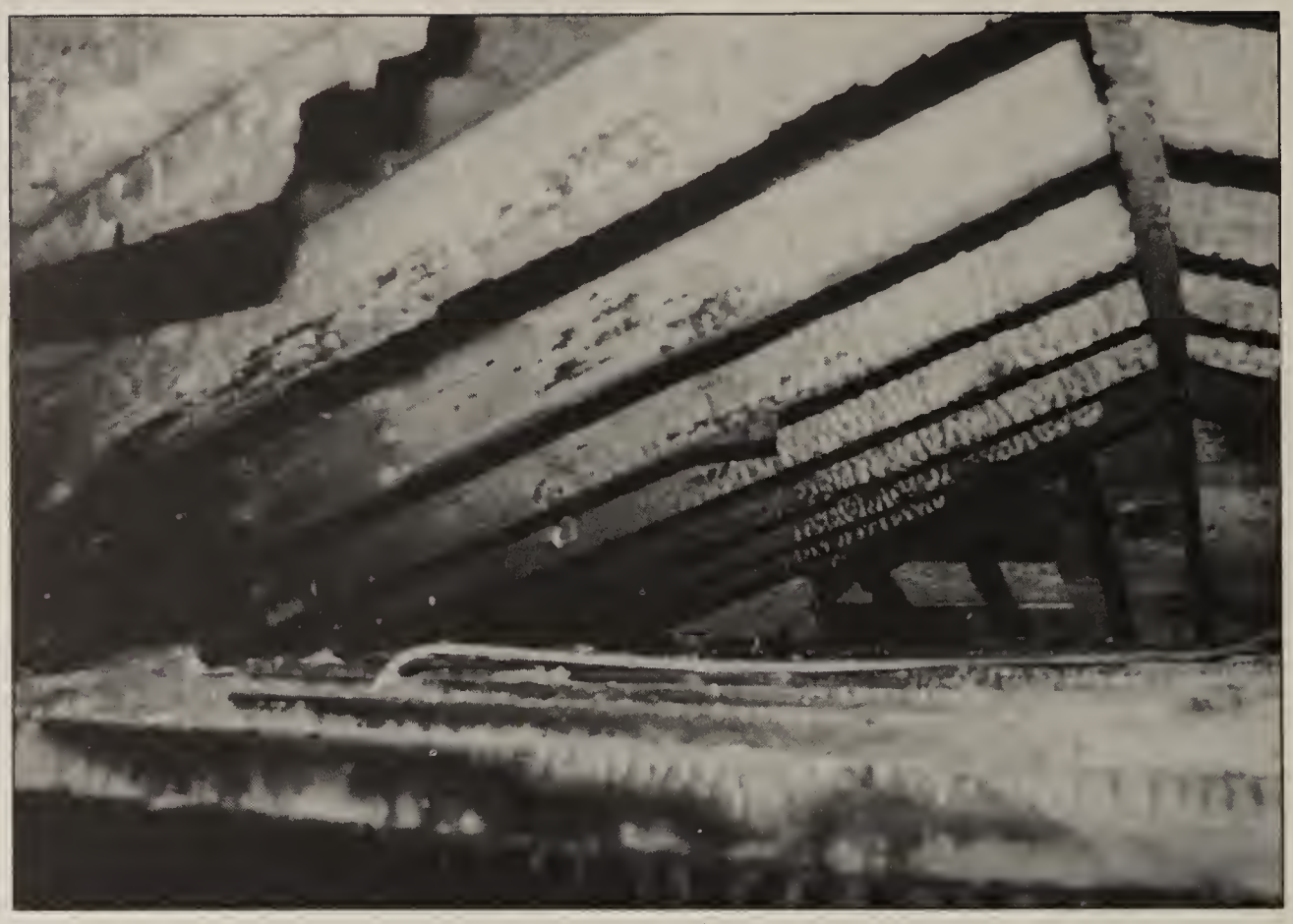


Photo courtesy of the Town of Munster Fire Department
Munster, Indiana

Goodbye, Betty

An arsonist:
what Betty wants to be
when she grows up.
Since she was little
a gift for burning.
Bugs and leaves
with a magnifying glass,
a doghouse
when no one was looking.
She presses a racket
into her brother's belly,
rubs the skin with a ball
so fast and hard it smokes.
He screams. Delicious.

She sees no future.
Shrink says
repression works.
Betty makes firefighter.
Crack team, forest alarms.
Puts her trust
in a flame-proof blanket.
She'll be safe.
Hot, yes, but not
a hamburger on a grill.
Or so she thought.

—Mary Winters
New York, New York

The Day the Library Burned

The library wreathed in smoke.
Flames spewing forth from every orifice
in a frenzy to feed on every written page.
My ever quixotic mind first willing, then forcing,
my feet through the flames.

There on the shelf–
All the great poets.
Their silent screams, bursting in my head.
Some demanding.
Some gently pleading.
I pause.
The ashes drifting down like molten snow
upon my skin.

How can I take just one
and let the others burn?
I make my choice.
Skin peeling, hair all gone,
I stumble blindly through the door.
One volume
clutched lovingly to my breast.

—Aubrey G. (Duffy) Bebout
Morganfield, Kentucky

BELONGINGS

by Joanne Zimmerman

When Maureen Feeley knew she was pregnant, she also knew that she couldn't continue to stay in the Campbell's boarding house after the baby came. She didn't want to go home to her family in Boston. Her husband Kevin was an M. P. on the Air Base—she wanted to be near him as long as possible. Eventually, she knew, he would go overseas to police the troops fighting Hitler in Europe, or Hirohito in the islands in the Pacific.

She haunted real estate offices in Lake Butler, and got bored looks or indulgent smiles, but no leads. She walked up and down the streets in the small southern town, in the heat and humidity of mid-summer, knocked on the doors of strangers when she suspected there might be an apartment. On one of her walks she noticed a man going up the outside stairs to a garage loft, carrying a hammer and two two-by-fours, and she followed him.

"Hello." She gave him her best smile. "I'm Mrs. Feeley."

"Hey. Ha 'y' all. Carlie Hebert." He wiped his hand on his overalls and extended it. He pronounced his name "Collie." It seemed strange to Maureen that a man should have a dog's name. "What can I do for you?"

When he admitted that he was making an apartment of the space over his garage, Maureen's face grew pink. "I'll take it!"

"Law, miss!" Carlie laughed. "It ain't near finished. I'll let you know when it's finished."

"No," Maureen said. "I'll take it right now. I'll help you finish it, if you'll let me. I've got to have it."

She didn't tell anyone—not even the friends she had made at the boarding house, Winnie Lindell whose husband Richard was an aircraft mechanic at the Base, or their landlady Maybeth Campbell—for fear that someone would offer more money and she would lose out.

As her waistline grew, Maureen began to despair. Carlie's pace was maddeningly slow. Kevin helped, too, on his Tuesday and Wednesday off, but that didn't speed things much. After the first hour or so, Carlie would wipe his forehead, sit down on a plank or an upturned keg, and bring out a jar of moonshine whiskey. The first time he offered Kevin a drink, Kevin slugged it down. Then he had to sit, gasping for air to cool the firestorm in his stomach. Tears overflowed. "Where'd you get that stuff?" His voice was thin and high.

When Carlie could stop laughing, he said, "Out in the swamp. You never tasted anything like that, did you?"

"Can I get some?"

"Naw. They'll sell it to me 'cause they'se kinfolk. Then I sell it to Brent Campbell, and he sells it by the glass to you G.I.'s."

"Sell it to me, then." Kevin sounded heartier, but Maureen was frowning.

"Naw. Brent would kill me. Besides, you being an M.P., you'd likely get me in trouble. I'll *give* you some. Just drink up," and he screwed the lid on the jar, having second thoughts about his generosity.

For a few days in October, a brisk wind from the north cooled the air, lifted the humid blanket, revealed a brilliant blue sky. Dispositions improved. Maureen decided to let Winnie help with the finishing touches, even though Winnie was looking for an apartment, too. She felt confident in the friendship; that no one would take advantage of her this close to term.

Winnie walked with Maureen to the apartment, accommodating her pace to Maureen's slow, heavy, duck-footed waddle. They were in nice contrast to each other—Winnie slim and dark, Maureen chubby, pink and red-haired.

They scrubbed floors, washed windows. Finally, Carlie got around to paying the electric company to hook up; then he put in an old refrigerator, a two-burner electric plate, a wooden table and two chairs in the kitchen; last, he installed a second-hand mattress and box springs on legs in the other room, handed Maureen the key and collected the first two months' rent in advance.

Maureen and Winnie washed down the bed springs with kerosene, scrubbed out the refrigerator, stamping on cockroaches that ran out from underneath. "We don't have to import any. We have our own home-grown."

Maureen bought two muslin sheets, two pillow cases and two bath towels in the dry-goods store on Butler Avenue, and a few yards of red-and-blue print cotton to make curtains for the windows. They borrowed Jemmie's wagon and hauled Maureen's suitcase, a carton of odds and ends she had accumulated, and the picture of Jesus, from the Campbell's boarding house to the apartment, and hung the picture over the bed. They put a bunch of red and orange zinnias and calendula in a mayonnaise jar on the dining table.

Maureen looked around the small, bare, ugly room. "Well," she said sadly, "I guess this is home. It's awful, but it's mine." They looked at one another, mouths turned down, eyes misting, and burst out laughing.

Maureen wiped her eyes. "I know it's silly, but I just love this place. It's the first time in my life I've had anything like this that belonged to me—just to me. I shared a room with my big sister, and then with the little ones. When we were married, we lived with my parents and all my brothers and sisters and my sister's children, until Kevin enlisted. It was awful. Made the Campbell's seem like heaven. But," she added, "I'm glad to be out of there, too. I can't stand that Brent Campbell. Carlie says he gets anything they want for the G.I.'s."

"What does that mean?"

"That old moonshine whiskey. And girls. I

know he has a poker game going in his office. Kevin told me. He lost his whole paycheck one time, but he promised me he wouldn't go there again. I don't see how Maybeth puts up with Brent."

On Saturday, when Winnie's husband Richard had time off, she took him to see the apartment. Since there were only two chairs in the mean little room, Winnie sat on the bed. Maureen said quickly, "Oh, don't sit there!"

"Why not?" Winnie looked around for danger.

"That's bad luck. I know that's silly, but right now I need all the good luck I can find."

Richard stood, gave Winnie his chair, and remained standing through the rest of the brief visit. The home made curtains hung listlessly at the windows. Smells of household cast-offs stored too long and moldering in the garage below; crankcase oil, paint left over in open cans; garbage pails set outside against the wall. "It stinks here," Maureen said. "Sometimes it gives me a headache."

"Why don't you complain?"

"Where would I go if he kicked me out? He says he'll clean it up. That Carlie is always working on something and never finished." Cockroaches freely investigated corners and crevices. "I'll probably have to do it myself."

On Wednesday, after noon dinner at the Campbell's, Maureen announced, "I'm going back to the Base with Kevin," holding his arm.

Winnie gasped, "Maureen! You're not in labor!"

"You don't think I'd be standing here talking to you if I was!" she laughed. "No, I'm not due for a week the way I figure it, but I'm going to wait in the Base hospital. I might as well be *there.* How would I get there in a hurry? I can just see us waiting for the bus on Butler Avenue." She patted her big stomach. "I'd have the baby before I got out there."

"Oh, Maureen!" Winnie was surprised by tears. "You'll let us know. Kevin, you call us the minute anything happens." She leaned over the protruding stomach to hug Maureen, jumped back when she felt the baby kick out, and everyone laughed.

Maybeth's father said, "Going to be a boy. Look how he sticks out in front. Got you that time, didn't he?"

"I wish it were mine," Winnie said wistfully.

"Right now you could have it." Maureen pressed her hand to the base of her spine. "Look in on my apartment, will you, Winnie? Just make sure that everything is all right."

The following Monday Kevin phoned. "It's a boy. Eight pounds, twenty-two inches," he said proudly. "Another Irish cop."

Eight days later, on his regular day off, Kevin brought his little family back to the apartment over the garage. Winnie had tried to clean it, at least to keep down the population of spiders and roaches. They put the baby Brian in a blanket-lined carton on the dining table, set the table legs in cans filled with water to keep the insects away.

Kevin peeled ten dollars off a thick roll of bills held by a rubber band, and sent Winnie out to buy groceries. "And a six-pack. Make that two."

When Winnie returned, Maureen was nursing Brian, tears running along-side her nose to the corners of her mouth. "He doesn't seem to want to settle down," she sniffed. "He started crying right after you left. I don't know what to do with him."

"He'll be all right," Kevin said, opening a beer. "Try giving him a bottle."

"I don't have any sterilized," Maureen said tremulously. "I haven't been able to put him down long enough."

"Then let him cry for a while," Kevin said brusquely. "Never did 'em any harm."

"I suppose you know," Maureen said in an aggrieved voice.

Winnie said, "I'll do it. Tell me what to do. He just doesn't know that this is home, that's all." She started putting milk and produce in the refrigerator, groceries on the shelves. Kevin counted his change, gave Winnie a half-dollar. "Here."

Crossly anticipating another errand, Winnie asked, "What for?"

"For you. And thanks a lot."

"Oh, I..." Winnie stopped herself from returning it, held it in her palm. "Thanks."

Each weekday Winnie brought noon dinner to Maureen from the Campbell's kitchen, and spent the afternoons playing with Brian. "Oh, he's so perfect! Look at his tiny fingernails!" His fingers curled over her index finger. "And he's so strong!"

"Kevin says he gets that from him. I hope he doesn't get the temper, too!" Maureen picked up the baby, feeling the warmth of his sturdy little body accommodating its shape to her own breasts and shoulder. The room smelled of urine from the diapers soaking in a scrub-pail, and the rich sour thick smell of breast-milk.

On his days off, Kevin was building a bed for Brian, working in the garage below. He had to clear a space among the odds and ends of lumber, shingles, paint cans, turpentine. There were still shavings all over the floor, curls of pine, sawdust from the construction of the apartment.

He came upstairs smiling. "It's finished, but we'll have to let the paint smell wear off before we put him in it. Too strong now." Maureen did not reply, continued to feed Brian, breasts and baby discreetly covered with a flannel cloth. Kevin stood over them for a few minutes, then he said, "I'm going out. Anything you need?" Maureen gave him a wordless reproachful glance, which he carefully ignored, picked up his cap and clattered down the wooden stairs.

Winnie asked, "What's the matter with you two?"

Tears dripped down Maureen's face, down the sides of her nose, onto Brian. "I don't know. It's awful. He's going out for beer. He used to buy it and bring it back here to drink, but now he stays away. He hangs around with Carlie. With Brent. I don't know where he is half the time."

"I guess men don't have as much feeling for babies..."

"It isn't the baby. It's me. Kevin doesn't like me any more. My body. He won't even look at me, at my breasts," Maureen sobbed. She put Brian against her shoulder. His small round head wobbled upright and then collapsed. "I can't help it if they look funny." She indicated her nipple with her free hand. "This part is bigger, and brown. He hates it, the way it looks. I *want* the milk to dry up, but it hurts. I give Brian a bottle as much as I can, as much as I can stand it. Then I let him have the breast, and Kevin hits the ceiling. Hollers like a madman. He doesn't know what it feels like. I only wish it could happen to him!"

"But he loves you. Loves Brian, too. He built a baby bed, didn't he?"

"Yes. I suppose that's what he' s saying, in his own way. I don't care. What difference does that make to me?"

When Kevin returned to the Base that night, he didn't leave grocery money for Maureen, and she sniffled red-nosed, teary-

eyed, all week. Winnie loaned her some money, and couldn't understand why the tears continued to flow. "I'm not worried about it. Kevin will pay me back. He just forgot."

"He didn't forget. He stormed out of here. We had a big fight. He promised me he'd stay away from Brent and that poker game." She looked down at Brian, sleeping quietly on his stomach in his new bed, so that she saw his profile—tiny turned-up nose, one apple cheek, dark soft fuzz on his head. She stroked it, still weeping. "We could, you know, do it now, but he won't."

After that, on Tuesday and Wednesday when Kevin had leave, Winnie stayed away from the little apartment. Halfway through noon dinner at the Campbell's on a rainy Wednesday, Maureen arrived, wet, struggling to carry baby, diapers, bottle, blanket, umbrella. She handed Brian to Winnie and marched straight up to Brent. "Where's Kevin?"

"How should I know?"

"I waited and waited for him. I had dinner ready."

"He does not keep me apprised of his plans."

"He was with you this morning, Brent. I know that. Where is he now?"

"Now, how in the world am I supposed to know that? I'm here, right here; that's all I can be sure of." Brent looked around the table, smiling, returning the angry stares of his wife and Winnie. "I'm not too sure of that some of the time."

Maureen made a sound that was part moan, part cry, and turned away. Maybeth put her arm around her. "Long as you're here, honey, why don't you sit down and have something to eat. Here. I'll get some more potatoes."

Brian would not be put in his box, crying and fussing uncharacteristically. "He's nervous, too. He's always nervous when I'm nervous." Maureen held him on her lap, raising food high over his head to her mouth. After a few bites, she pushed her plate away, prepared to leave again. Maybeth said, "Don't you want dessert? It's cobbler."

Maureen shook her head. "I'm going to go back there and wait for him. I don't want him to come home and find I'm not there. He'll take the place apart, M.P. style!"

After dinner, with nothing else to do, Winnie was having a coke at the Azalea



Photo by Ted Calvin

Cafe, reading a magazine. The proprietor, Mr. Wilson, moved his huge bulk toward her as rapidly as possible, his big feet slapping flat on the linoleum. "Say!" he called. "I hear there's a fire over on Tupelo. Carlie Hebert's garage on fire. Ain't that where your friend lives? That little red-head friend with the baby?"

"Are you sure?" Winnie stood so suddenly that her chair fell over in back of her.

"Naw. I ain't sure. That's what I just heard, though. Sam told me. He just been by there in his taxi," but Winnie was out the door and down Butler Avenue before he had finished his sentence. By the time she got there, Army fire trucks had arrived, and every man, woman, and child in Lake Butler who could leave things untended had run to stand as close as possible to watch the fun.

Flames leaped thirty feet into the air, whipping tree-tops into a circular frenzy. The soldier-firemen sprayed water on the houses on either side, but did not waste effort on the garage. A sigh went up when the roof fell, sending a plume of sparks skyward, and the crowd fell back momentarily.

Carlie had driven out in the back-country to get a case of moonshine whiskey, and he had sipped a generous number of samples, just to be sure. He didn't want to deliver anything to Brent that he didn't approve of himself. When he drove down his own street, he aimed to set it down in the garage, but didn't make it on the first pass, so he circled the block again. He was turning the wheel with one hand and sipping at the open jar when he finally sidled into the garage, going slowly, but somehow his foot hit the accelerator pedal instead of the brake. He marvelled at the enormous noise, and the subsequent unresponsiveness of his old car. He managed to back it up a little, but part of the garage rear wall rode along on the hood, so he parked, rather than yank his building apart. He got out and stood looking at things for a while, wondering whether he should lift the hood and start tinkering with it now. Something suggested that he should wait until later.

Little sizzles of flame licked over the

engine, danced out to enjoy the puddles of oil on the floor, the sawdust, curls and shavings, piles of rags, odds and ends of pine, the open paint cans, turpentine and paint thinner. They lapped around his ankles as he turned to leave the garage and the whole thing went up in one gorgeous explosion that knocked him down. It wasn't until he got up and felt a draft on his backside that he realized it was bare, shoulder to knee, every stitch neatly burned off. He felt an urgency to get to his house and get some pants on. He walked in that direction, trying to cover his ass with his free hand (the other still carefully holding the jar which had miraculously not broken). There seemed to be a lot of people in his way, and he felt indecent. One crazy red-headed woman screaming at him, trying to punch him, kicking at him, although she held a baby and it was crying, too.

Maureen thought the first shock was an earthquake. The floor under her feet listed toward the back of the building. She grabbed Brian, ran down the stairs along the side of the building holding to the railing because the second shock had hit and the stairs were angled strangely, too. She noticed that other buildings in the neighborhood were unscathed, and that no one else seemed alarmed. Then she saw Carlie standing in the garage, regarding his old Pontiac, scratching his head. Flame licked out from under the hood, reached out to sample the debris. "Get out!" she screamed, and ran, screaming over her shoulder, "Get out! Get out, you damn fool!"

Winnie did not have breath for words when she finally arrived after an eternity of running more and more slowly when she wished she could fly. She put her arms around Maureen and Brian together, "Oh, Winnie!" Maureen sobbed. "We might have been killed!"

"Where's Kevin?" Winnie asked fearfully.

"How should I know? That son of a bitch! Oh, Winnie!" she wailed, "I lost everything! My clothes, and Brian's clothes, and the diapers. All the things we made—the curtains, the baby clothes, the pot-holders!" She could not continue.

Kevin pushed his way through the crowd, knocking people aside, looking around crazily, terrified. "Where...? Where...? Anybody in there?" he managed to ask in a choked voice.

"If there was, they'd be done to a turn," somebody laughed, ducked Kevin's fist.

"Naw. There's Carlie."

"There's the girl, too."

Kevin spun around, and for a second Maureen and Winnie saw the raw fear in his face, terror in his eyes. As soon as he saw them watching, safe, he pulled down the mask of invulnerability, the cheeky little bad boy, and sauntered over to them. Maureen sobbed, "You son of a bitch! Where were you? I was waiting for *you!* Where were you when I needed you? We could have been killed," her red hair flying, her face smudged, tear-streaked, her voice hoarse from screaming.

"Well, now," he looked around sheepishly, tried to put his arm around her, but she shrugged him off, stood close to Winnie. "I didn't know we were going to have a fire, did I? If I'd known we were going to have a fire, don't you think I would have been here to rescue you? Be a hero?" He could not mention fear. Kevin could break up a drunken brawl, stepping calmly between knife-wielding antagonists as a routine matter, nerveless, brave. Now that he saw Maureen was safe, Brian was safe, he trembled, he felt that he might vomit. He squared his shoulders, tapped his hat so that the visor nearly covered his tear-filled eyes.

"You don't give a damn about us! You weren't here! You weren't with me...with us. I'll never forgive you!"

"So..." He looked around to see who else besides Winnie might be listening. "... you'll never forgive me. Get a-hold of yourself," he said through lips that barely moved.

"You go to hell!" she screamed. "And I'll tell you something else. I'm leaving." She jabbed his chest with a sharp forefinger. "Oh, yes! I'm not going to stay here one more day. I don't have anything left to stay for. Everything I owned was in that fire. It's lucky we're alive. No thanks to you and your buddies."

"I wasn't with Carlie. You don't think I was out with Carlie?"

"I don't care where you were. I don't give a damn. I'm through! I'm going home!" The long "o" attenuated itself to a scream. "I'm going home!"

"Well, you aren't going home right *now*." He was feeling a little better. "Let's get out of here." He tried to take her arm, but she threw him off.

As his contribution to disaster relief, Sam offered them a free ride in his taxi to the Campbell's. Kevin opened the door with shaking hands. Maureen, clutching Brian, crawled in the back and Winnie followed. Kevin sat in front with Sam to talk about the fire.

"I thought it was an earthquake! I was waiting for you! Where were you, you son of a bitch? Don't tell me. I don't even want to know. I don't give a damn!" Maureen stretched her neck forward like a predatory bird, ranted at the bristled back of Kevin's head, the skin of his neck turning deep rose.

Maybeth and Brent met the taxi at the curb. Maybeth put her arms around Maureen, led her to the house. "Now don't you worry about a thing. You can stay with us. We'll find something for you to put on. Come in, come in now. Going to catch your death of cold."

Maureen put her head on Maybeth's shoulder and sobbed. "Never have been so frightened." She lay on the couch in the living room, covered with a blanket, her arm up over her white face, the freckles blood-red, her body convulsed from time to time with sobs. Winnie walked around and around the room jiggling Brian, cooing to him, singing to him, until he calmed and stopped crying.

Brent poured himself a drink, and another for Kevin who slugged it straight down. Brent shook his head. "That Carlie Hebert," he said ruefully. "I should have known better than to send him out to the swamp. Cost me something in whiskey." He seemed ready to expand on this, but Maybeth silenced him with an angry look. Brent poured another drink, handed it to Kevin, gesturing toward Maureen with a nod of his head. "Do her good," he said.

Kevin carried it to her, tried to put the glass to her lips. When Maureen smelled whiskey, she opened her eyes, swept it out of his hand, spilling it on his uniform and the rug. "Now see what you've done!" Kevin said, backing off, wiping at his trousers with his handkerchief. Maybeth went for a bucket and rag.

"You go to hell! You and your whiskey! You think that's the answer to everything! Have a drink! Go get drunk! That's not the answer to anything." Kevin looked around at the others with a sheepish grin. Maureen shrilled, "I'm through. You think I'm kidding? I'm not. Oh, my God! I've never been so frightened in my life! I thought it was an earthquake, and there I was alone with the baby."



Photo by John Carlisle

"Wasn't *my* fault," he mumbled, backing away.

Before Kevin had to leave to go on duty that night, he took Maybeth aside. "I sure appreciate your taking care of her. She's quite upset." He tried to smile broadly to show his unconcern, his confidence that all would be well, bravado covering his desperate inadequacy. He gave Maybeth a roll of bills. "Whatever she needs, you hear now..." He approached Maureen on tiptoe to say goodbye, hoping that she was asleep.

Maureen took her arm from across her eyes. "You think I'm kidding, don't you? You'll see. Next time you show up around here, we'll be gone."

"Now, Maureen, don't you do anything foolish," he said foolishly.

"The only foolish thing I did was to marry you and come down to this God-forsaken place! How hard I worked for that apartment! All summer in the heat, and me pregnant. Everything that was mine, everything that belonged to *me*—gone!" and she began to sob again.

Kevin looked to Maybeth for help. "I just *got* to go now."

"Go! Go! Then!" Maureen lifted herself up on one arm, pointing a finger at the door, her red hair flying around her white face, like a fury.

"That's what I got to do," he mumbled, and swaggered out.

On Thursday afternoon Maybeth and Winnie walked Maureen and Brian to the station for the afternoon train. There was no problem of luggage, since everything had been burned. Maureen wore a plaid wool coat of Maybeth's that was too long and too tight on her. Winnie contributed a scarf for her hair.

Winnie kissed Brian, who smiled unconcernedly. "I'm going to miss you, Maureen," she sniffed. "You'll write to me, won't you? We'll write to each other."

"I'll miss you, too. You could come and visit me. If Richard ships out, you could visit me. You could *live* with us. You know, big Irish family—always room for one more. Sleeping in the bathtub."

Then the train grew louder, larger, screeched to a stop, the porter swung down, put the stairs in place. Maureen hugged each of them. "Maybe I'll come back," she wept. "I'll probably come back after a while." They saw her at the window, waving and waving as the train pulled away—red nose, pink cheeks, her red hair glowing, framed in the sooty window.

Joanne Zimmerman lives in Homewood, Illinois.

Excavation

The trespassers trample the paper.
This is how the ruins are separated:
Circling children who press their hands
to the walls, still hot. Paper peeling
and paper melted, milk left over
like plaster in a bowl. A neighbor whispers
how and the blinds are fused closed.

She and he, what is hummed under arguments,
what is behind the television, what is shoved
into boxes. The dirt from the outside
mingles with the dirt on the inside
and everything is sun through a magnifying glass,
everything is bright snow and black shoes.
Nowhere is her silhouette. Nowhere is her fist.

This is how the birds take their breakfast,
beautiful and still, wings closed.
All around the place, they pass
and shake their heads, and build
on what has blown from the inside out. *This*
is not the only world turning: The street below
stops, takes dictation from the wreckage,
stories for long evenings. The day
churns. The boy cannot finish apologizing.

The Boy's White Hands, Which are Cold in a Dream

Two hundred birds wait in the back yard, and the sky
sways and moans. The sky is pink and black.
Someone has come and pulled a blind down;
he imagines what he sees.
The sky is pink and black and day is delayed.
The birds stand in front of the sun, and it admits
it is only the sun when against something less bright.
The boy imagines what he sees. He dreams
all day, and rehearses, retraces,
re-hears all things. Next door,
the whispering continues, the debating
did he or did he not?
If you stood in the yard below, if you were
a shape or a color that mattered,
you might revise this whole scene.
Send someone to the apartment door
at the precise time, wish a storm
minutes before, twist a screw
through his heart, *wake* him.
But you are not allowed.
You whisper, *blame, blame, blame, blame, blame.*

Stove on Fire

The boy is with his spectacular view.
As the traffic below sings, he
sings back. And the girl says,
The stove is on fire.
This apartment is small, this
matters. The stove is burning
and it is more important
than the dream she dreams,
where she is in that traffic,
passing by these lives,
and he holds her hand when she wakes
and she is suddenly living.

She says, *The world spins*
and spins on a dime you've lost,
but he waves her on, no emergency.
She knows his receipts will be the first
to go, then his outline, and then
he will be logged in nowhere, recorded
never. Now, she begins
to construct the fire wall,
piles leaves and scraps and the garbage
blowing behind her as she enters.
He says *nothing,* it is nothing
the way they see their outlines swallow
the colors around them. The neighbors
are not coming. And later,
she and he will not remember each other.

She and he, a beautiful distraction,
sick butterflies under a microscope,
without dimension, without size
or shape, or feel.
Two stories up, across the alley,
someone is hopeless, dying, hopeless,
their head turned toward the beauty, just so.

An instruction is left,
and apology. *This is how*
they will find us:
No bother, small birds.

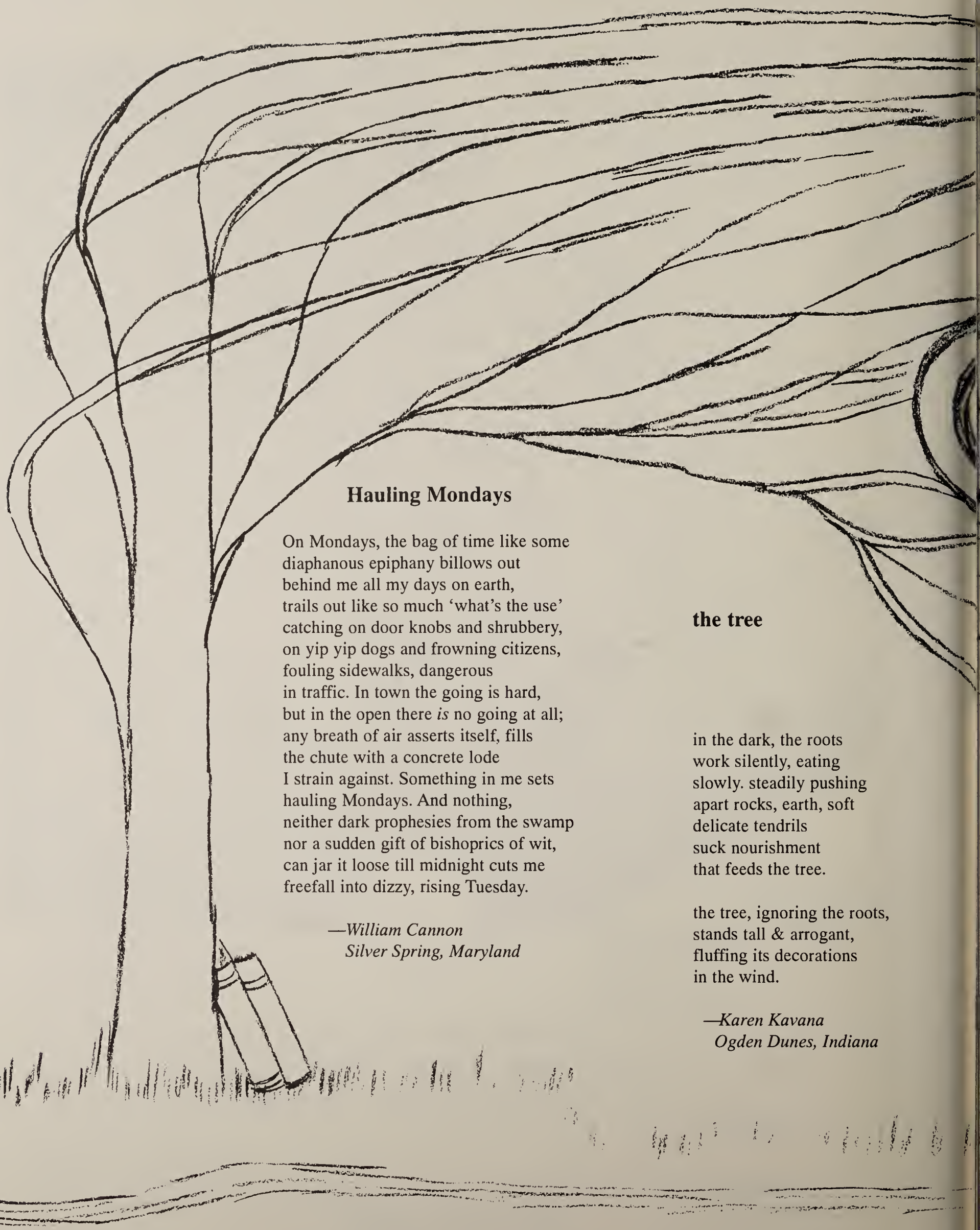
—A Trilogy—

Kelly Ritter
Chicago, Illinois



Of what fire are you,
still flame gazing peacefully
on your sun-drenched branch?

–Merrill Ann Gonzales
Dayville, Connecticut



Hauling Mondays

On Mondays, the bag of time like some
diaphanous epiphany billows out
behind me all my days on earth,
trails out like so much 'what's the use'
catching on door knobs and shrubbery,
on yip yip dogs and frowning citizens,
fouling sidewalks, dangerous
in traffic. In town the going is hard,
but in the open there *is* no going at all;
any breath of air asserts itself, fills
the chute with a concrete lode
I strain against. Something in me sets
hauling Mondays. And nothing,
neither dark prophesies from the swamp
nor a sudden gift of bishoprics of wit,
can jar it loose till midnight cuts me
freefall into dizzy, rising Tuesday.

—William Cannon
Silver Spring, Maryland

the tree

in the dark, the roots
work silently, eating
slowly. steadily pushing
apart rocks, earth, soft
delicate tendrils
suck nourishment
that feeds the tree.

the tree, ignoring the roots,
stands tall & arrogant,
fluffing its decorations
in the wind.

—Karen Kavana
Ogden Dunes, Indiana

POETRY

Evelyn Ronco

Editor

PROSE

Nancy Conner

Editor

creeps slowly up to cover
copper maple stumps
left half-buried in the slope
of the front yard.

The stumps seem a pair
of severed hands
whose gnarled fingers worm down,
down to root and river.

Pale dear violet flower,
quite at home with marble
and with loam—

I watch you cut and spin and weave
green glossy gloves
to bind old wooden wounds.

I spend my summer
clipping vinca vine
and wonder
if the fingers could be mine.

—Mary Driscoll
Millbury, Massachusetts

Overnight Express

The chassis leans on wheels to hold the road.
The bus frame bends as if it would jerk free,
but settles down again with its full load.
Your sleeping body angles against me,
with a rubbing motion, and starts to press,
but you hold darkness in your sleeping fold,
as darkness holds you, out of consciousness,
in cold that may not be aware of cold.

Between us and disaster is the tread
of rubber that keeps concrete under us;
between us and the station is the thread
of abstract need that keeps us on the bus:
but warmed between tenderness and desire
is all the heat between us through attire.

—Fileman Waitts
San Pedro, California

Never Listen To Music When You're Writing

Never listen to music when you're writing.
Especially Bartok.
Or Stravinsky.
Or Brahms. Or
Parker or Davis or Gillespie.
Beauty does not beget beauty;
in this game it's one rose at a time.

Better to have something that you hate,
something that makes you mad,
drives you mad, like Muzak (then you know the game).
If you stay sane and try to
make a word, the notes will
mock you. If you are listening to Brahms,
the notes will invade the letters,
change their DNA,
make C into C#,
make the word into a chord.
And once that starts,
you're done for. You
can't even write the lyrics
to go along.

Never look at a painting when you're writing.
Unless you are describing the painting.
Light will spear your mind; lines will
destroy your lines; color will kill you.
Shadows will darken, will suffocate
your page. There will be no ground
against which the letters can appear.
You will not even be able to draw a word
and see it. You might as well be blind.

Never touch a sculpture when you're writing.
All you'll do is want to feel the page.
You will get lost in spheres and planes,
in the endless mysteries of concave/convex.
You won't be able to write an R without
losing your way. You won't complete the word,
let alone a phrase.

Never listen to music while you're writing.
Unless you're writing checks, paying your bills,
making out a grocery list. In
those things
it is forgivable
to make mistakes.

—Charles Owen Lawson
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Meditations

Evening is the time for meditation,
whether by starlight or lamplight,
whether the meditations of a boy

or an old man in a new world
wondering what to wonder.
The day is for doing

all the common things that must be done,
while stars and lamps turn on
the meditative mind.

—Robert Funge
San Carlos, California

Outloud

I find my voice
among the voices here,
where the trees' long throats shudder
'til their slow moans scatter toward the sky—
where the jagged calls of jays
serrate this soft, otherwise quiet day
with the joyous noise of being
and being quite, quite alive.

I am all voice,
crackling as I walk,
rattling like the squirrels do
between trees—
every step sparking off a blaze of sound
among the hushed
hidden in the leaves—
sighing with the sighs of weeds
as I brush through them in the field.

We murmurs here,
at the feet of sky and sun,
of moon and ancient night
are the prayers of the earth
are the voices of the soul,
outloud.

—Christina Wilkerson
Fort Wayne, Indiana



Photo by Lee Bielawski

IN THE RED CORNER

by Mark Scott

My fight for the World Middleweight Championship had almost been postponed because of sleet and snow. We all had snow chains in New York and were used to the bad weather. But when it snowed a few inches in Texas, people acted as if they'd been invaded by Martians. They wanted to postpone the fight a week; but we raised a stink and the fight was on as scheduled. We wanted to get out of Texas as soon as possible.

Visiting fighters never got a fair shake in San Antonio. Everyone knew you had to knock out the local fighter to win. Don't let the judges decide. The hysteria of the crowd would sway even the most fair-minded judge.

A Gonzalez title defense was like a religious ritual. Preparations for the slaughter of the sacrificial contender were carefully carried out by the promoters and city fathers. Advertisements for the fight were on billboards, on buses, in restaurants, everywhere.

By fight-night, the town was in a frenzy.

Gonzalez had earned five million dollars since winning the World Championship four years earlier. He would make a little over one million for fighting me. I was being paid $300,000.

It was a string of unlikely events that had secured the Gonzalez fight for me. A year earlier, I had been retired from boxing, trying to sell real estate.

I had been practicing the warm smile, asking about the family, the gentle touch on the shoulder and the other moves that make up the salesman's arsenal. One day, while I was watching a motivational film, a guy showed up in my office wanting me to fight again. An Olympic champion, undefeated, needed an opponent for a network television appearance. The one they had scheduled had broken his arm in a car accident; and they needed a last-minute replacement.

Jackie Rollins had enjoyed a steady diet of old, washed-up fighters since winning the Olympics. He was supposed to knock me out easily; but I got lucky. He had me on the ropes in the fifth round when I threw a left hook with everything I had. It landed flush on his chin and he dropped flat on his face. The referee rolled him over and took out his mouthpiece, not even bothering to count.

They had to carry Rollins from the ring. He was okay, just a mild concussion. I visited him in the hospital. He was in great spirits, chattering away about my lucky punch. He was a great defensive fighter; and I really had been lucky.

A lot can happen to a professional fighter. Even great fighters like Rollins take a chance every time they climb between the ropes and into the ring. There is no workers' compensation or pension. But what other way can an average guy make over a million bucks in one night?

Rollins had been next in line for a shot at Gonzalez' title. Some had said he would make up to one million dollars as the challenger. I was relatively unknown and was only making as much as I was because of the one-punch knockout of Rollins. They kept showing the tape of Rollins lying on his back as part of the television promotion for my fight with Gonzalez.

If I could beat Gonzalez, I was guaranteed at least one million dollars for the rematch. I'd never have to make another sales pitch; and my wife could quit her miserable job and stay home with our son, Jeffrey.

My wife Connie didn't want me to fight to win. She knew boxing well enough to know Gonzalez was supremely dangerous. She didn't want me to take any chances. Taking a dive for $300,000 wouldn't have been the worst thing I had ever done. To tell the truth, it wasn't until two weeks before the fight that I began to consider victory.

Gonzalez always opened his training sessions to the public. The papers reported that Gonzalez looked awesome. He was notorious for beating up sparring partners, giving his fans a good show. I went to watch him on a day when he would be boxing with Harold Watkins, an old fighter who had beaten me early in my career. Watkins had a sneaky right hand that I hadn't been able to avoid. But he wasn't throwing it at Gonzalez.

In fact, none of his sparring partners were throwing punches at him. Gonzalez had always been hard to hit; but they weren't even trying. His defensive skills weren't being tested. As the fight grew nearer, I started to believe he was beatable.

Three days before the fight, Connie came down from New York with Jeffrey. I hadn't seen my four-year-old son in several months. He stared at me with a blank expression, not recognizing me. Five years ago, when Connie had fallen down the stairs, the doctors had suggested abortion. But Connie had refused. Now her determination was paying off and Jeffrey was even speaking a little bit. The therapy was expensive, though.

Now it was fight-night. Pablo, my trainer, and Thomas, my cut-man, were wrapping my hands for the fight. Thomas was singing one of his strange Caribbean songs as he worked with the gauze and tape. When he finished, my hands were as hard as rocks.

From my tiny, cramped dressing room, I heard the crowd cheer the local boy in the fourth fight of the night. My fight was next and I still felt tight. There wasn't enough room to warm up and get ready. The local promoters used every trick in the book to insure victory for their fighters.

The fighter who had left this dressing room a few minutes earlier apparently hadn't been ready. Now they were carrying him back in. He was glassy-eyed and babbling something about a short count. A knock-out victim. It was time for me to go into the ring.

As I climbed through the ropes, I noticed that most of the crowd was in the concession lines, buying beer and nachos. Gonzalez would always make the challenger wait in the ring for at least ten minutes before he came out. The crowd knew the routine.

Gonzalez came slowly out of his dressing room behind his huge entourage. I couldn't help but admire his style as he strolled majestically to the ring.

Although he was the champion, Gonzalez liked to be announced first. The announcer was in rare form that night. He has a nickname for everyone's hometown. ". . . and haaaaailing from the river city . . . . . Roberto, el tigre, Gonzallllllez."

The ring trembled as the cheering lasted for several minutes. I watched Gonzalez shadow-box in the corner and tried to time his head movements.

"And in the red corner . . ."

Now he would announce me, the challenger. I nodded to the crowd as they booed and hissed.

Thomas, a former featherweight contender from Barbados, was worried that every fighter in the red corner that night had lost. The red corner had bad mojo. He was fussing nervously with my water bucket while I tried to concentrate on Gonzalez.

The man shadow-boxing across from me was short and powerfully built. He was bobbing furiously and taking little stutter-steps. He always wore his title belt into the ring and never took it off until after the challenger was announced. After seventy-nine fights, his face was unmarked.

"Seconds out for round one."

His head movements were too quick and precise. I couldn't hit him with a jab. Full of nervous energy, I pumped at least one hundred jabs at the bobbing target in the first

two minutes of the fight. Gonzalez seemed to enjoy it, putting on a clinic on how to slip a punch. At the end of the first round, he caught me reaching and landed a hard right hook above my left eye. I felt blood drip into my eye as the bell sounded.

"Throw that right to the belly." Pablo's answer to all the world's problems was a good body shot.

"Come on, Joey, punches in bunches," Thomas was saying as he pressed "end-swell" against my eye.

In round two I felt his famous left hook for the first time. It crashed into my rib cage and I knew what death must feel like. I tried to clinch; but he was too strong. Lying on the ropes, I absorbed some heavy shots. But by the end of the round, I was making him miss.

Round three came and went as I circled to my left, away from his left hook.

I'd studied films of Gonzalez and I knew that he lifted his chin ever so slightly when he threw a left hook. My success depended on exploiting this weakness. But I couldn't throw my right without the risk of getting tagged. I'd have to expose myself.

In round four I saw my opportunity. The champion's chin was exposed and I fired a hard right hand. My balance was perfect as I pivoted off my right foot, carrying all of my weight into the punch. But Gonzalez weaved under the blow and ripped a left hook into my side. He followed with a whistling right that just missed my chin. We had both missed chances to end the fight early.

Round five was the round when Gonzalez had said he would knock me out. I spent the round grabbing and holding. The booing of the crowd was so loud that the ring vibrated; but I survived the round.

By round six his head movements had lost some of their snap. I had already lost a point for pushing his head down in the clinches. His neck and shoulder muscles were getting tired, so it was worth it. A wave of nauseous exhaustion swept over me as he pounded my body along the ropes. I knew the feeling well. It would pass. For six months I had trained every day until the bile swelled up into my throat. Exhaustion is an important dimension in a boxing match, like the dark basement in a house. I hoped to bring Gonzalez into this dimension with me. I knew I could find my way out of the basement; but I didn't think that he could.

In round seven I began to feel the sting of rope burns on my back. Gonzalez moved forward relentlessly and I kept finding myself with my back to the ropes. I had planned on being the stronger fighter if I made it into the late rounds. But Gonzalez was setting a superhuman pace, spurred on by his adoring fans.

In the eighth round Gonzalez dropped me with a left hook and I fell straight back, the back of my head crashing against the canvas. That is what must have done it.

I pulled myself up at the count of eight; and Gonzalez charged in for the kill. But he was too anxious and I was able to fight my way out of danger. My legs, rock-hard from running ten miles a day, held me up through the onslaught.

In round nine my right hand began finding its mark. The hesitation was gone. It bounced off the side of Gonzalez' head time after time, just as it had been trained to do. The undefeated champion looked confused for the first time; and the crowd was silent. He staggered back to the blue corner.

Pablo and Thomas were going crazy in my corner, sensing victory. "You got em, Joey. Just keep throwing that right hand."

"Seconds out for round ten."

The blood flow from above my eye couldn't be stopped. My vision was getting blurry and I thought the referee might stop the fight. This would be the last round, one way or another.

Gonzalez was on top of me and I could feel his heavy breathing. He dipped to throw a left hook and I nailed him with the hardest right I had ever thrown. He staggered backward and I moved in to follow up. Punches in bunches.

He leaped up from his crouch and his left fist exploded against the side of my head. There was a second explosion as the crowd erupted . . .

The next day the headlines were proclaiming it the best fight ever fought. Gonzalez was on all the news programs, talking about the fight.

I woke up in the hospital, with my wife crying at the foot of the bed. My tongue was heavy when I tried to talk. Connie told me to be quiet and rest.

That night in San Antonio I could not be beaten. Gonzalez was the greatest fighter in the world; and I had defeated him. I've seen the films of the fight several times. I had somehow gotten up from the floor from the tenth-round knock down. Gonzalez charged and ran right into a perfect right cross to his chin. He fell like a sack of rocks just before I collapsed in my corner.

The damage to my right eye was so severe that the boxing commission wouldn't let me fight again. Besides, one of those left hooks, or more likely the hard fall to the canvas, had left me with a slight speech impairment. It made it hard to argue with the commission. The million dollar return fight didn't happen. Gonzalez reclaimed the title and fought five more years, never losing again.

I made some money from doing endorsements and started my own business. Lots of people wanted to do business with the man who had conquered the great Gonzalez.

My son got better and he and his wife are now expecting their third child. He speaks well and even makes fun of the way I talk, saying I'm a punch-drunk old fighter.

My family goes on vacation to San Antonio every few years; but I never go with them. I still have bad dreams about that town. I dream of many different ways that fight could have ended; but one thing is always the same. The crowd is on its feet; and nothing can be heard but the people screaming for the death of the fighter in the red corner.

Mark Scott lives in
Rolling Hills Estates, California.



Illustration by Merrill Ann Gonzales

a kaleidoscope
of morning sun, leaf shapes and
disembodied song

—Merrill Ann Gonzales
Dayville, Connecticut

The Crow And The Mockingbird

The black bird lumbers
across the street.
A second bird comes,
half his size,
a vitriolic flash
of gray feathers,
white on furious wings,
hits the shoulders
of the plodding
oaf, back-somersaults,
plummets,
hits him again;
and they peel apart
like two old friends
on the corner,
waving goodbye.

—Marcyn Del Clements
Claremont, California

Pond In Sunlight

Sunlight,
filtering slowly through mist,
illumines the backs of
bouncing
frogs

Aimlessly floating,
water hyacinth swirl
over dusky gleaming
waters

Ripples
radiate in rings
as leaves
land

Pines and poplars
stretch themselves to heaven,
to bring summer down to
earth

—Lisa A. Pennington
Munster, Indiana

ON THE ROAD WITH JOHN

by Richard Kennedy

My first exposure to John Carlisle was in the spring semester of 1989. As a wandering, undecided student, I signed up by chance for the American Short Story and Video class offered by the English Department. Although English had always been my best subject, until that point, I had figured that a career in English would not offer enough monetary reward; but I needed a class, and this one seemed as good as any. John Carlisle was the instructor.

Looking back, it is no surprise that I enjoyed the class and registered for another literature class the following fall. Whether fate or coincidence, the instructor for the new course was the same distinguished, bearded gentleman—John Carlisle.

A trend had begun, and by my third class with John in the fall of 1990, I was leaning towards a degree in English. As if he knew the way in which I was headed, John's positive comments on my papers and tests, suggesting that I become an English major, convinced me that I could not avoid a career in that direction. What was most convincing, however, was the guidance that John provided during our first advising meeting. Later, this guidance turned into a mentoring relationship and, most importantly, a lasting friendship.

As a proponent of education outside of the classroom, John and I took our first American Culture journey together to Oklahoma in August of 1992. Earlier that year, he had been asked to prepare a paper on American Indian Art for an American Culture conference at the University of Helsinki. Since one of John's areas of expertise is the Depression-era post office murals, he combined the two subjects into a study of the Oklahoma post office murals painted by and about Indians. Covering five thousand miles in eight days in an old, but reliable, Dodge van full of photography equipment and an eight-foot aluminum ladder, we not only photographed over a dozen murals spread throughout the state, but we took numerous side excursions to museums and monuments. I am convinced that many of these side trips were for the benefit of John's young assistant. Although the journey was long and we were glad to return, it was the beginning of several journeys for the two of us.

In the last four years, John and I have taken many other trips together. We have driven the width of Indiana countless times in search of the original route of the Lincoln Highway through that state, traveled to Salt Lake City as sponsor and student so that I could present a paper at an undergraduate conference, presented a paper together at an American Culture Conference in Philadelphia, and made numerous smaller journeys. For every trip that I have taken with John, however, he has made several times that many in his career.

John's travels began a while back in a small town in southern Illinois. Born thirty-nine "Jack Benny" years ago in West Frankfurt, Illinois, John, the second of four children, was raised and lived his first eighteen years in Herrin, about twenty miles north of Carbondale. A descendant of coal miners, Arthur Carlisle, John's father, moved his wife and family to the former home of John's grandparents when John was ten years old. (Possibly the beginning of John's interest in material culture, the new Carlisle home was a converted church and former one-room school house.) Arthur, a Kroeger grocery store manager, dreamed of providing for his family by keeping an apple and peach orchard and hogs. Having purchased the proverbial forty acres and fruit trees along with the new ("old") Carlisle home, Arthur became a farmer. Unfortunately, the rigors of managing a grocery store and a young farm proved too much for the elder Carlisle: only a couple of years after beginning the dream, the elder Carlisle suffered a heart attack and died, having worked himself to death.

After his father's passing, John was placed in charge of the household—his mother eventually became the secretary for the Herrin High School principal, and his elder brother went off to college. John spent his high school years earning good grades (there being little choice in the matter when one's mother is in the principal's office every day), taking care of his younger siblings, tending the hogs, working part-time in an electrical supply company, and listening to old-time radio.

When he was college age, John packed his bags and moved to Liberty, Missouri, to attend William Jewel College, a small Liberal Arts school. He spent a year and a half as a psychology and pre-ministerial major. The combination of raised tuition (John was putting himself through school) and a change of major, however, led him to Southern Illinois University. There, he earned his B.S. in Education with a major in English and an M.S. in Higher Education.

John's first career move was to the University of Nebraska where he accepted a position as the Director of Student Activities. After a year and a half there, he traveled to Michigan to become the Assistant Dean for Student Activities at Oakland Community College. It was at Oakland that John met his lovely wife of twenty-five years, Pat (nee Davis), a counselor at the school. After a year and a half at Oakland, he decided to pursue an M.A. in Humanities. This he received in 1969. With his third degree in hand, John sought and earned his Ph.D. in American Culture from the University of Michigan in 1972.



Photos by John Carlisle

As a whole, 1972 was a good year for the Carlisles. Not only did John earn his doctoral degree from Michigan and accept a position as Assistant Professor of English at Purdue University Calumet, Danielle Carlisle, John and Pat's first daughter, burst onto the scene. A husband, a father, and a professor, John would become a welcome addition to the Department of English and Philosophy under John Tuckey and Purdue University Calumet as a whole.

Within the English Department, John's first move was to create film, pop culture, and folklore classes. As a professor of American Studies, he felt it was his duty to his discipline and to the students of PUC to provide a more diverse curriculum. For over twenty years, students have benefited from his instruction in these American Studies classes, not to mention literature and composition courses.

The first few years after John's appointment to PUC were quite eventful. In 1974, Pat Carlisle gave birth to their second daughter, Shawna. In 1975, John produced a documentary film on the Depression-era post office murals of Indiana. This film, distributed to schools and libraries in the state, led to his promotion to associate professor in 1976.

Having completed his Master's Thesis in 1969 on the response to the Depression in the music, art, and literature of the 1930s, John became interested in the artwork commissioned by the Public Building Service under the Treasury Department during the Depression. (The Public Building Service should not be confused with the Works Progress Administration. The PBS was concerned with buildings and artworks for *federal* projects; the WPA was the government agency that funded state and city projects in conjunction with WPA sub-agencies, such as the CCC.) In particular, he has researched the post office murals, works of American art often overlooked by the very people who use the post offices. These murals were originally commissioned by the PBS between 1934 and 1943 and paid for with one percent of a new post office's building budget—only new post offices were eligible. If a post office could afford to set aside the one percent, a contest was held to determine the artist. In total, there were about fifteen hundred murals completed in the lower forty-eight states and Alaska. John has surveyed over a third of them.

Under Interphase Productions, John has produced videos and a slide-lecture series on the post office murals of Indiana (as mentioned earlier), Texas, and California. All of these have been distributed to the schools and libraries in their respective states. In addition, a complete photographic survey of North Carolina is ready for production, although what may become of it is unclear. Many of the murals portray tobacco farming and products—a subject under fire at the moment.

In 1989, John earned the position of full Professor at PUC. In addition, he was made Assistant Head of the Department of English and Philosophy. In 1991, he left his position as Assistant Head and became the Acting Head of the Department of Foreign Languages. There he served until 1993, when he rescued the English Department by stepping into a recently abandoned Department Head position. Because of the suddenness of the vacant English Department position, John was forced to stay on as Foreign Language Head. He served as dual Department Head for almost two years before stepping down to dedicate his time to teaching. Both departments were well served under his tutelage.

John has not really slowed down in the last year or so. After presentations at American Culture Conferences in Finland (1992) and Denmark (1993), he was flown to Lithuania in the fall of 1994 by the United States Information Agency (USIA) to plant the seed for a program in American Studies at the Universities of Kaunas and Vilnius. His greatest moment so far in academia, however, was the recent publication of his first book, *A Simple and Vital Design: The Story of the Indiana Post Office Murals.*

This book of photographs and essays, published by the Indiana Historical Society and available in bookstores, documents the murals and the stories behind them in Indiana post offices.

With a new book and several visual productions complete, John is hard at work on other projects. For instance, he is working on another American Culture book tentatively titled *Caboose in the Cornfield,* a photograph-and-essay study of material culture along I-65 and US 40 in Indiana. A book on the early professional life of the American social-realist artist Ben Shahn is also a possibility. Keeping up-to-date with technology, he would like to produce a CD ROM program about the Golden Age of Indiana, the artists, music, and writers of Indiana between 1890 and 1920.

In the last several years, it has been John's goal to create an interdisciplinary Master's program in the humanities, conferring the degree of Master of the Arts in Liberal Studies (M.A.L.S.). Although the idea has been met with a certain amount of resistance and indifference thus far, a few students have benefited indirectly from this approach. Combining areas within the humanities, such as history, English, psychology, sociology, and foreign languages, this type of program would help to expand the graduate program at PUC and attract more qualified students. Thankfully, John is not one to give up the fight.

* * * * * * *

Attempting to detail all of the events of a good man's life is like attempting to harvest every fruit, every flower, every vegetable of a Victory Garden. Somewhere along the line, an award-winning fruit will be forgotten, a beautiful flower overlooked, or a glorious vegetable overtaken by a garden marauder. Yet, the garden lives on, producing a new crop year after year—regardless of theft or the ignorance of the harvesters.

I am grateful to John for much and hope to return some of what I have reaped of his guidance and friendship. I look forward to the coming years—years that will bring new journeys, new adventures. It is my great wish that I will be able to join him on some of these journeys. As an educator, a mentor, and a great friend, there is nothing like being on the road with John.

Richard Kennedy lives in Highland, Indiana.



For Joseph

Fits ill these small rooms,
colt long of leg, long narrow feet
catching on the rockers of chairs.
Sprawls on the furniture,
yards of leg and arm left over,
walks high up, legs working like stilts,
and bends down to tell me
of a thinner, clearer atmosphere.

Oh my good giraffe, my giant,
my lucky find.
As we walk the orchards,
he hands down yellow apples
until my arms ache with
the weight of that fortune.

—Amy England
Chicago, Illinois



Illustration by Ken Withrow

Home Companions

For wild animals in search of homes,
some house-features never lose their allure.
A hundred generations of sparrows have perched
in the two-inch gap under our house eaves,
busily dropping nesting materials inside
in a hopeless effort to colonize the attic air,
leaving the floor beneath littered
with knee-high mounds of ancient twigs and grass.
Each October, too, a fresh generation of field mice
discover our enclosed porch. Presented
with a saucer of poisoned wheat, they spend the nights
storing it grain by grain in the toes of my work boots.
After midnight our old house's inner walls
resound with scratchings and scamperings.
Something unfooted also patrols that narrow maze,
and one such left draped across an inner beam
among dust, insect carcasses and power cables
the tan husk of its four-foot skin—
a cousin, perhaps, of the large blacksnake that somehow
reached the second storey of our neighbor's house
and coiled sleepily one morning at the head of the stair.

Such visitations leave us grateful
to creatures which keep their distance—
a chipmunk family content
to nest beneath our front porch steps,
the mother skunk who conceals her kittens
under a pile of lumber in a distant shed,
fox squirrels which shyly shred black walnuts,
seated on the lower branches of a back yard tree,
and sleek white-tailed deer, glimpsed at dawn,
browsing briefly on our garden greens.

—Julian Gitzen
Toorak, Australia

Meeting The Night-God

I've walked alone here, scouting
for the cat print wider
than my shepherd-dog's,
imagined the lion-scream
in the night. On rainy evenings
when the damp settled down
below my collar, in the small
of my back, I wondered
about the strength
of a human spine, and counted
the path, touching
familiar trees to memorize
the way back out.

Tonight
I see no way out, but only in:
a presence in the night,
its breath as sharp
as starlight, its hand dark
as the underside of eyelids
closing to sleep.
I'm wide awake and listening
to that presence
investing everything inside
with radiance. The porcelain
teapot, the fire in its stove.
The simple window-sill from here
to the vast outside,

where there's nothing but dark,
and everything is light.

—Taylor Graham
Somerset, California

The African Violet

Days ago
The purple flower
Was turgid with life,
Vivacious in the soft
Breeze
And the filtered sun.

Today
The blackened skin
Supports
An atrophied body
And a drooping head.

I roll the wizened body
Between my thumb and
Forefinger—
The granules squeal
As they drop on the floor.

—Mahdy Y. Khaiyat
Goleta, California

Coffee Shop Talk

In the comfort
of strangers,
when the evening
seems to drag,
loneliness is a great
thing to share with someone

—Sara L. Holt
Nipomo, California

Cold At Christmas

Awake
She
Dreams of
Furnaces
Fireplaces
Flames in
Steel drums
Sometimes simply
The steam of
Street grates
Longs for
Wood stoves and
Coal
Cauldrons and
Kettles
The silent spill of
Tea
A heated brick
At the bottom of
A bed
Even the wispy
Barn-breath of
Animals
Stabled against
The deep
December snow.

—Eileen Spinelli
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

Years

When the rain at last rains down
I make a wish as I stand at the window:
In sixty years, my daughter in my arms
will drive by this small, warm house
filled with pictures of her now.
The night will be one of summer's last,
and frost will be falling early from the sky.
She will slow down and point out the bright windows
to her children and tell them
she was born here.
She will laugh, look at the garden,
and remember.
She will show her children a picture
of the three of us kneeling by the flowers,
and it will have been years
and years since we died.

—J. Patrick Kelly
Cincinnati, Ohio

When I Die

When I die
do not foolishly place flowers
upon my cold grave,
instead
place the flowers in your favorite vase
and let your sparkling blue eyes
drink in their robust colors.
When the blossoms have all burst open
in their splendid hues
remember,
my own heart
blossomed with your splendid love.

—Carol Ann Bekavac
Dolton, Illinois

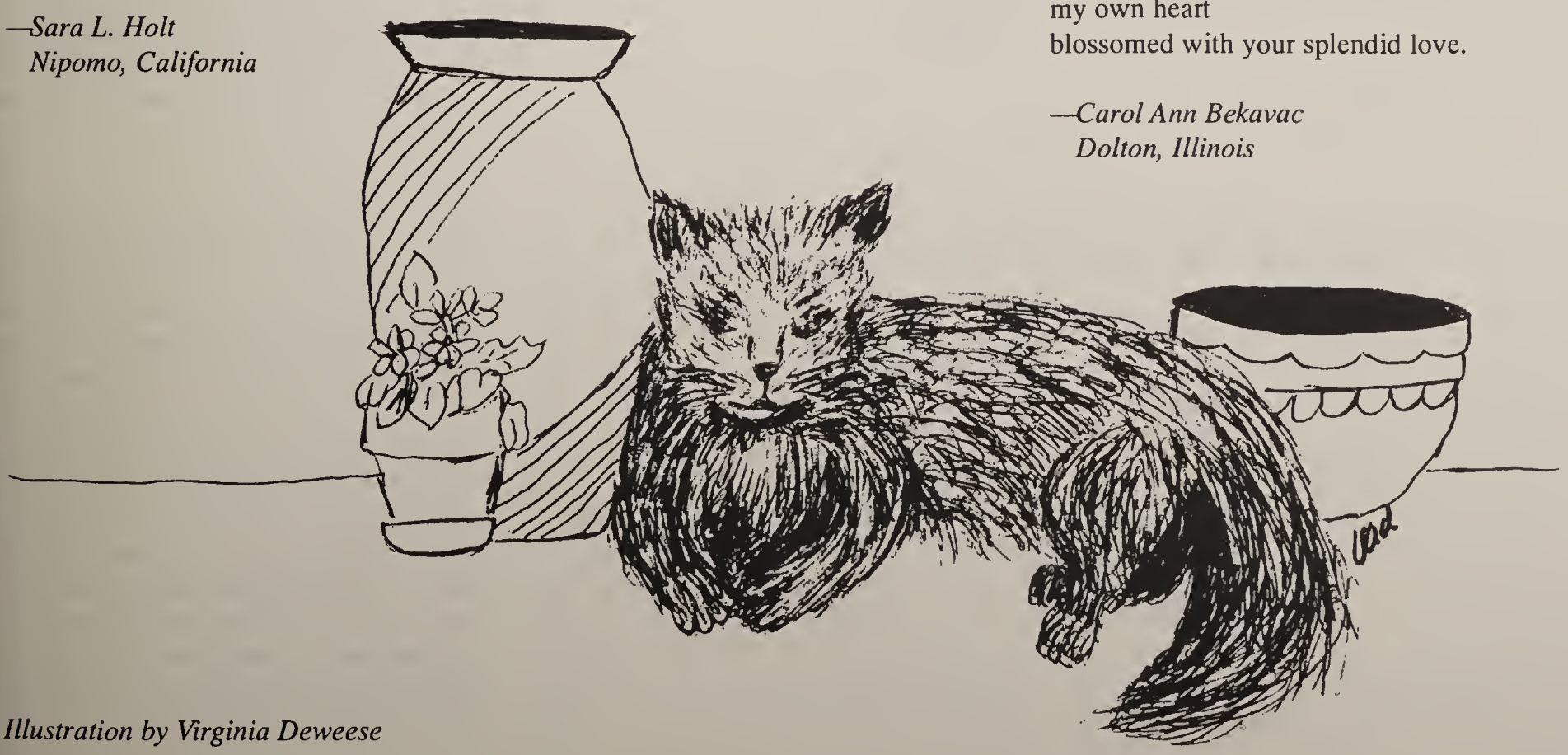


Illustration by Virginia Deweese

Slivers of Light

Happiness is like a beautiful crystal star
fallen from the sky,
shattered into countless pieces,
and scattered throughout eternity.

We will never find all of the pieces,
only tiny slivers of light
to heal our wounded world.

****

A young mother with an ex-husband,
three children,
dimples in her cheeks,
an '82 Chevy,

... and terminal cancer

has hidden her dimples for a very long time.

But today ...

she awakens to the warm caress of the sun upon her face,
and the sweet song of birds nesting in the trees.

The pain is asleep.

Today, the bottle of mind-robbing pills will stay in the drawer.
Today, she will dress herself in soft colors ...

and gentle smiles.

She will sing with her children,
and breathe in the fragrance of life on a summer breeze.

Her children will discover the treasure of their mother's dimples
captured in a long forgotten smile.

Tomorrow, perhaps, will not be good,

but today

she is alive ... and she is inside a sliver of light.

—Sharon Dorelli
Griffith, Indiana

CUOCERE ITALIANO

by Nancy Coppolillo-Conner

The Apennine Mountains twist and weave their way from the Northern Region of Liguria through Italy's central provinces, all the way down the peninsula to the southern toe of Reggio di Calabria. At the turn of the century, my grandparents emigrated from the village of Altomonte, a small hamlet which sits high in the Southern Apennines, in the region of Calabria. They settled in one of the ethnic areas of Chicago with other *paesan* from their village. Ardent to become American citizens, they were eager to assimilate to their new country, but at the same time, they adhered vehemently to the flavors and traditions of their heritage, especially southern Italian cooking. Each family bungalow in the neighborhood had a backyard that consisted of a small patch of grass and a huge vegetable garden abundant with tomato plants, eggplant, a variety of peppers, basil, oregano and much, much more. Most of the Italians had been farmers in Italy, so it was only natural for them to cultivate their own vegetables and herbs when they came to America. Just as Luigi Barzini once said, "Italians live close to their food," so a backyard garden was essential.

My favorite childhood memories include the times I spent visiting with my mother's mother, Grandma Theresina. Her tiny kitchen always had the aroma of fresh herbs and savory Italian cheeses—my favorite has always been the imported Provolone. As a child, I loved to sit and watch her and my mother prepare a meal. Sometimes, they would give me a job to do. My favorite job was to string together the sweet red peppers. As my mother and grandmother cooked and stirred the sauce, all the while conversing in their native Calabrian dialect, I would sit in my chair, with a bushel of peppers on the floor near my feet. One by one, I would run the needle through the pepper's stem. When

I was finished, grandpa would take the peppers out to the back porch where he would hang them until they were dry. At that time, my grandmother would fry them in olive oil. I loved how they sizzled and crackled like popcorn in the hot oil of the frying pan, and how they crunched in my mouth with a hot juicy sweetness when I would eat them on sandwiches with hard-crusted bread. Needless to say, they were delicious. To this very day, whenever I make a sandwich, it must include fried peppers, both hot and sweet.

Fortunately, my grandmother's cooking expertise was passed down to me and several of my cousins. We learned how to cook by watching and by helping. Cooking an Italian meal requires not only skill, but the love of good-tasting food that is prepared—not from the writings in a cookbook—but from the heart, through taste and smell and feel. The Italian cooking that I grew up with consisted of homegrown vegetables, as well as homemade breads, pastries and pasta. The women in my family always made delicious food and they made enough to feed the entire Italian Army.

Preparing a meal was an event. All of the ladies would be in the kitchen, their aprons tied securely around their waists, hands washed and dried, and everyone standing in place around the kitchen table. Grandma would sit in her chair in the corner and supervise as pounds of flour were turned into the most delicious, mouth-watering ravioli that were to be stuffed full with fresh ricotta cheese and parsley, gnocchi and biscotti that you could ever taste. These creative women knew just how thin to roll the dough for ravioli, and they snatched the gnocchi and penne from the huge pot of boiling water with a slotted spoon at exactly the right time.

I grew up surrounded by excellent cooks and the wonderful smells of hand-picked herbs simmering in piquant sauces. In the city where I lived, there were Italian grocery stores in each neighborhood, so I didn't have to travel very far whenever my mother or grandmother needed a new can of Colavita olive oil or fresh Provolone or Scamorza cheese. Today, I travel great distances into

women. Meals are often prepared quickly and don't require the help of the entire extended family.

As I look back at my childhood days and remember the times that I spent in my grandmother's kitchen, in the midst of loved ones speaking the rapid Calabrian dialect as they laughed and joked with each other while they stirred, kneaded, rolled, salted, chopped and tasted, a smile comes to my face. It's a memory that brings me comfort, but at the same time, makes me realize that we have paid a price. Due to necessity or sometimes preference, working outside the home is the choice that many women have made today. If presented with other opportunities, I'm not sure what choices my grandmothers would have made for themselves. I can only

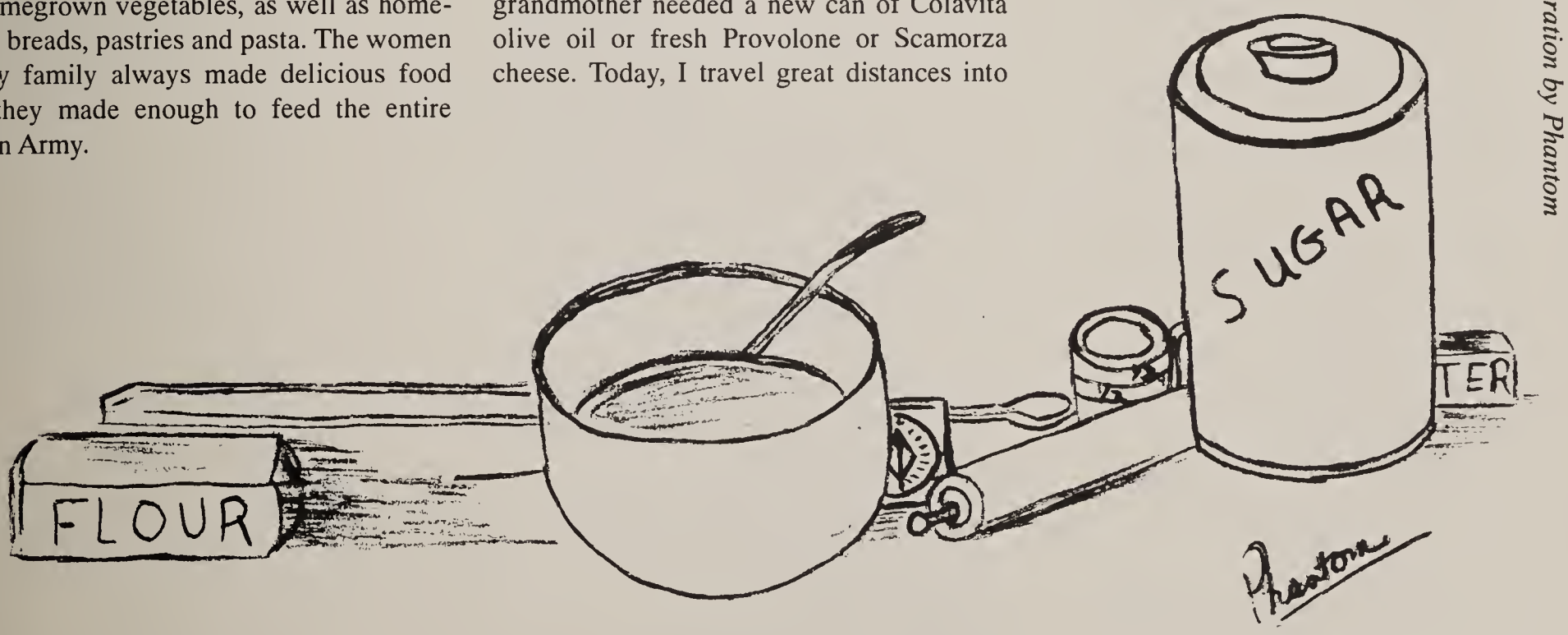


Illustration by Phantom

Whenever homemade bread was made, enough dough was set aside to make several pizzas. I remember how my mother and grandmother would measure the flour with their hands, a pinch of salt was added along with the eggs and yeast. All of this was mixed together by hand, and then kneaded until the dough was smooth and soft. I don't remember ever seeing a mix-master in my grandmother's kitchen. I loved the smell of fresh bread taken hot from the oven, but my favorite was the pizza with its sharp, pungent sauce and homemade sausage, well-seasoned with paprika and fennel, that lingered in my mouth for the entire day.

the city to find Italian stores that carry the products that I cannot purchase in the suburbs. I do, however, plant a herb garden each summer, and celebrate the holidays with the same traditional foods that I grew up with. Although I enjoy cooking and making the dishes that my mother and grandmothers made, I don't spend nearly the same amount of time in the kitchen that they did. Most of their days were centered around the preparation of meals for the family. Now, life is quite different for most women. The opportunity and necessity of acquiring a formal education and a good-paying job have gained importance in the lives of today's

thank them for preserving a heritage for their children and grandchildren that is rich in culture and cuisine. Whenever I have the chance to bake bread, or make ravioli, biscotti or any of my favorite Italian dishes, I put on my tapes of Pavarotti and listen as I chop, knead, stir and taste, all the while thinking of my grandmother and wondering what she would say if she were sitting in *my* kitchen.

Nancy Coppolillo-Conner lives in Highland, Indiana.



Retrieval

When I lay broken
At the back of Time
And empty as a larval husk,
My self untenanted
And ditched behind the privy
With my palm held out —
I felt the fertile land
Beneath my nail.

My tools unsuited to the work,
Indeed my fingers gnarled
From under-use,
And wet self-pity
Overflowing at my eyes,
I nonetheless began.
An hour later I'd prepared
A span no larger than my hand.

—Earl Coleman
Croton on Hudson, New York

Vanity

Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.
—Ecclesiastes

The silver moon comes into the room
sees a man alone.
In the distance flares the song of youth
till the wily hour of dawn.

The wind remembers him young
wile, and bold,
immortal.

Dreams soared at dawn.
Curtains rose.
But the day has slipped away
unnoticed,

and suddenly
it's dusk.

—Abraham Linik
Needham, Massachusetts

Psychopomp

All summer I kept
The old man busy
And he was too tired
To complain.
I said,
Look—since you're
Going anyway—
Just do me this one
Favor.
So we spooled
Out yards of electric
Cord, screwed in hundreds
Of gleaming white bulbs,
And he carried them
Miles and miles, deep
Into darkness.
Then
I waited each night
Beside his sickbed,
Impatient for him
To show me the way.

—Phillip Lund
Bloomington, Indiana

Reaching Deep

Turning in, I
reach deep and empty
my pockets of what
little change there is,
mumble some words
like a prayer
we must pay for,
nothing free
anymore, not even
sleep. I am like
those who occupy
the night cafeterias,
reversing their
pockets onto the tables,
reaching deep,
coming up empty;
hungry for anything
and everything.

—Dave Medlinsky
Oakland, California





in memory of Luis Donaldo Colosio

you fell,
you went down,
and the blue, blue sky
fell with you—
and the hearts
of many

you risked yourself
and you died
for the sake of all,
for your belief
that no one needs
to live

without shoes,
without the skill
to read and know,
without the promise
of walking
a clean morning street,
without the sense
of understanding
what laughter means,
without the taste and touch
and truth
of pure day

you risked yourself
and you died
for all of these—
you have taught us
to begin to care

—Charles B. Tinkham
Hammond, Indiana

Surviving Is

Tonight, I carry into sleep
worlds of suffering
deposited at my doorstep
just today.
My world is too pain-filled tonight
for me to sleep.
I too must shed the hurt,
perhaps in valleys of the dark
where summer sheds its harshness.
There, leaves not yet shed
may absorb the sting of pain
before fall's first frost.

Surviving is the art of shedding
unwanted hurts,
placing them at the altar of the caring.

The hand of midnight moon is healing,
and daybreak holds for each of us
a new beginning.

—Harding Stedler
Wheelersburg, Ohio

Migration To Black

Migration from white to black
involves
leaving the southern cozy
where the sun's fire
glares and spires
pushing toward northern cold
frigid and icy.

From black to white
the perennial flowers
year after year
rising as resurrection
from acrid cold
to warm light

while

the necromancer practices her art
among the high-nested silent crows
sending the scent of cinnamon bark
for cold comfort.

The lofty conjurer
knows
it takes practice and desire
to become a shadow
and edge out among the stars.

Without black they are unseen.

—Joyce Frazeur
Fredonia, New York





Photo by Ted Calvin

like harry lime

he accepted money
to make little dots
stop moving
he just shut
his eyes and did it
so in his mind
they never existed
he must be an atheist

maybe one day
all those little dots
will coalesce
into a gigantic blob
and ooze all over him
or maybe even right now
it's starting to ooze
out of his ears

at the end of each story
he'd forgotten they'd existed
but they were dots like him
and me and you who
think and feel and dream
and sleep and one day
fail to awaken the day
another dot stops moving

forever

—Laurie Calhoun
Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Prestidigitator

Healthy fingers
kept hurt away; sturdy
nails covered by flaking
pearlized polish tickled
while soothing childhood
fears. Fingers
swollen by persistent
arthritis continued
protection from harm.
Unadorned nails, though
brittle, smoothed my
adult frowning forehead.
Lean with waste of
terminal illness, those
fingers had the slender
feel of a young woman.
I circled them.
Daughter's
digits have no magic;
her breathing disappeared.

—Lois Greene Stone
Pittsford, New York

The Meeting: Autumn

You advance toward me
slowly
against extended brightness
of moving deep-crimson leaves.

As we meet,
your familiar green eyes
appear distant;
disturbed.

Our words
of conversation
are difficult;
scarce.

Surrounding us,
this temporal season
of excessive brilliance
lingers,
suggests a curious mood
of personal deception,
caution;
the wind's continual rhythm
of concern.

—William Beyer
Belvidere, Illinois

Adam's Song

No one sang to Adam
When he was a baby.
Alone without parental
Cuddling and guidance
He heard baby bears
Sigh after nursing
And lion cubs purr
Under their mothers
On the plains of Eden.

Who started the singing
To sleep of Children?
These soft smooth sounds
Became embryonic mothersongs
That filled lair spaces
Where first dreams finally
Filled with fathersmoke,
And remembered parentlore.

—Howard Prescott
Alexandria, Virginia

LEARNING THE ALPHABET

by Andre M. LaPalme

Inside Deaf Harold's two-room cabin, there is a wood stove—a black metal box with a glass side pane and a rusty pan of hissing water on top, the whole thing the size of an infant's coffin—with a pipe jutting out of the back at a forty-five degree angle, then correcting itself slightly as it exits the roof. The stove is too near the kitchen table, and Deaf Harold never eats there anymore. He has written on his note pad to Nan that his cats don't like it. The heat makes them pant like sad, drooling dogs that forever beg and want—but never get.

Nan finds him today, sitting on the sofa with Sam and Butch purring directly at him, squatting like furry statues with movable eyes that watch her skip inside, then shut the door. She takes her coat and hat and gloves off, hangs them over the back of a chair. She stands near the stove to warm up. After she has stopped moving, those eyes fix back on Harold and his noisy eating. A plate of wing dings is in his lap, and a paper-lined pan of fries is on the TV tray next to him. From the couch he can glance into the snowy TV that only seems to work when it wants to and then out onto the flat, white openness of frozen Sand Lake.

He nods and mumbles, "Hello Nan."

She didn't knock; like always she never does. For ten years she has been his connection to the rest of Sand Lake, dropping off his potatoes, beer, milk and other little things he needs. In the summer, she biked; in the winter she snowmobiled; in spring, fall and when it rained, she drove. Every so often, he got important phone messages at The Sand Lake General Store. She brought them, and kept him up on all the keg parties, local gossip and fishing news. Today, she watches him dip a fry into a pool of scarlet ketchup. As he raises it to his lips, watches it droop and laughs like Goofy, Nan feels unsettled. She can never tell if he thinks something is funny or if he's getting excited. Like his note pad scrawlings, the easy finger alphabet and the more complex sign language, only fragments are decipherable.

It seems to Nan that Deaf Harold—Sand Lakers called him D.H. and he claimed that he didn't mind it because after all he was deaf—is always eating when she shows up. Or cooking. He loves to cook; he's pretty good. The only station that comes in with any regularity is PBS out of Alpena, and he knows all the food shows. When the TV is on the fritz, he invents or substitutes the ingredients, cooking methods and spices. Icebox spaghetti sauce with any leftovers he can find like canned peaches or bacon or hardboiled eggs; soup with celery, macaroni product and chunked-up hot dogs; pork roast that's stingy and steaming, simmered in Boone's Farm Strawberry Hill, then seared on top of the wood stove on a flat iron plate, are all among his creations.

D.H. was eating the last ten Tuesdays she came by, always one of those wild creations, something that sounded awful but ended up tasting pretty good. In fact, the last time Nan recalls D.H. *not* eating was eleven weeks ago, minutes after *it* happened. As she sits near the stove, she remembers that day. It is now referred to by D.H. as the day of *the situation.* It was a cold mid-November one. Immense snowflakes were spiraling here and there, each one having a destined landing spot. Some even landed on D.H. himself as he stood outside in his red velvet robe. As Nan whizzed up to the cabin on her Polaris, she thought the snow to be beautifully deliberate, not a flurry of craziness, something to make the deer hunters happy. As she watched the flakes come down, then turned off her machine and heard the ticking of the warm engine, the sun was only beginning to glare off unfrozen Sand Lake. The horses next to the cabin were jumpy. D.H. wouldn't say anything to her. No grunts, no hand signs, no alphabet. He didn't have his note pad. When she asked him what was wrong, he looked away and didn't even try to read her lips. Right then she knew it was serious, and she rushed inside.

Jim bled from his wrists and ankles. Straight-edge razors were next to him, and Miss Prissy, his orange Angora, was on his belly licking her paw, then grooming her face. Sam and Butch tip-toed through a pool of blood, walked across the carpet and into the living room. Nan followed their red tracks to the places where they settled: Sam on the window sill above the TV, and Butch on the couch. Jim was D.H.'s lover. They'd met in Detroit at a 1973 Tigers' game. Al Kaline was their hero; they had both witnessed his 399th home run. Jim had the ball that Kaline fouled off, right before slamming his last homer. After the game, they'd become pen pals, and ten years later D.H. finally talked Jim out of the dangerous city. They had been together ever since—off and on. Sand Lakers saw them as two deaf and dumb men sharing a cabin. But Nan discovered the truth. She promised to keep their secret, if they'd teach her their own private alphabet.

As Nan warms her hands over the stove and D.H. finishes his fries, she remembers that wintry autumn day with the same vividness as always. Images of running cats, gurgling D.H., slit fat white ankles, hairy wrists, the tip of a steak knife stuck into Jim's bare chest now wash over her. D.H. held the sides of his head, moaned what Nan knew was *OH MY GOD JIM! OH MY GOD JIM!* There was no phone but she went for it anyway, sucking the scene up into her mind in about five seconds. Then, she stormed back out-

side where she broke wide icicles from the eaves. She was in such a rush, she sent the huddled horses galloping away from the wire.

She brought the icicles inside, slapped Miss Prissy off Jim.

"Get!" she screamed. "Fucking asshole cat!"

"G-e-e-e-t!" D.H. stomped his foot and chased Miss Prissy until she ran out the front door.

Nan strapped the flat icicles to Jim's wrists and ankles, using anything that she could find: a kitchen towel, two socks, a blanket from the cat's bed. She propped Deaf Jim's legs up on the couch to make the blood work its way uphill. She yelled that Jim would live, and D.H. nodded his bushy hair. Nan told D.H. *he* had to stay and hold Jim's arms upright to slow the bleeding. He had to make sure the ice didn't shift. And he had to keep pressure on the cuts.

"Just don't look at it," she shouted, pointing out the window and across Sand Lake. "Look out there! Okay? Watch me!"

He nodded, and she ran outside where the snow had changed into a frenzy of maddening whiteness. She hopped back onto her snowmobile, spun out of the driveway and drove around the edge of Sand Lake. When the Sand Lake Volunteer Fire Department got to the cabin, Jim's wide body was white and the carpet was red. They loaded him into somebody's Blazer, raced him to the emergency room. Later, the doctors said that he lost roughly two-thirds of his blood. The ice and pressure had saved the rest. He's okay now, in another hospital far away from the cabin, a psychiatric one. Nan's heard that his gashes have healed into neat scars that stand out on his white skin like strands of pink bubble gum. D.H. took the bus three times to see him, and each time he came back to the cabin more and more confused. D.H. and Jim had talked, but Jim didn't know why he used those blades. Jim is finding it practically impossible to make any signs with his hands. His fingers tingle. He can still write but his crooked letters blend into scrunched-together words, words that look like a child's alphabet. They are ones that even D.H. can't always decipher for sure.

Nan looks at scrunched-up D.H. now, at the far end of the couch. The situation all came about three days after D.H. told Jim that he wanted to sever their relationship. D.H. just wanted to be a free man, independent like his cats. Sam and Butch were hunters, coming and going as they pleased through a rubber flap on the door. Living on what was there. Some cold nights they didn't even come home, sleeping in the barn above the horses, purring and dreaming and keeping each other warm. They took care of each other. That was where Jim failed; he worried that Sand Lake would find out about them. D.H. said he was sick of Jim's lies. Jim lived in the cabin for a few months at a time, then took off to the city. Pretending, always pretending that he had a girlfriend in Sand Lake. He couldn't even admit that he loved D.H. Not even to D.H.

Now, D.H. flings a piece of meat to his cats, winks at Nan, says something. She likes it when he tries to talk; he makes a cooing noise like a pigeon. She begins to smile. When D.H. sees this, he grabs his pad off the coffee table and scrawls something down. Nan gets up, walks over to him. She sits next to him on the couch, pats him on the back and asks him how he is doing today. "How about a fast ride on the back of the snowmobile?" she asks. She tells him that he'll feel the sting of the cold air on his face. He nods, then hands her the note.

"If you meow I'll feed you too," it says.

When she looks up from the note and into his eyes, he Goofy laughs again. This makes Nan happy, that he can laugh. She doesn't mind being made fun of, not like this. She used to come on Tuesdays; now, Nan feels responsible and comes more. She's been trying to get D.H. to move away from here to a small room in the back of her store. She's told him for weeks now, *you know this place is a shack.* So much heat escapes that snow melts on the roof and stalactite-ice columns form on the sides. The wood stove burns jack pine like chunks of gasoline, too hot and fast. The cabin is near the horse stables, on a small road that seldom gets plowed. The only car that passes by each day is Wanda the mail lady. Half the time she gets stuck. Nobody else lives around here. Nan tells D.H. these things again, then says, "Please come live with me."

D.H. shakes his head no. Nan isn't surprised. He picks up his pad and writes, tears off a page and hands it to Nan. It says that the cabin is okay, and he *likes* the stove. It heats the place fast. If he doesn't get plowed out right away, it's no problem because he has nowhere that pressing to go. *Who better,* he scratches on another page then pounds the pad with the eraser tip, *than some deaf guy to live next to the noisy horse stable?* He laughs again, knowing that his point is an excellent one. These are arguments that Nan has heard these past ten weeks. Today, D.H. writes more, that soon he'll have the VCR back to watch his favorite Charlie Chaplin classics. He gives the pad to Nan, gets up and does a waddling imitation, walking to the wood stove. He pretends to burn his finger on the black metal box, and shakes his hand violently. He puts on Nan's hat, picks up a piece of kindling. Using it for a cane, he goes into the kitchen. He opens a cupboard then looks back at her. He puts a bay leaf above his lip, wiggles his makeshift moustache until she smiles. Then, Nan turns her head away.

She finds it difficult to argue with such logic. That is just like D.H., she thinks, finding the best in any given situation. All she wants is for him to leave behind the carpeting that now has a patchy trail of lightness going over to the window sill. She wants to haul that couch out to the Lost Forty and burn it on the bonfire at the next party. The antenna is buried in a snow drift, and now he's rigged a coat hanger to the back of the TV. Seldom can the reception reach this cabin, so far back in the woods. As she looks around at the stacks of newspapers, unopened mail on the kitchen table, then at the mound of ashes and cigarette butts in the tin ashtray, she wonders what to say. What *can* she say to all this? She looks at the note pad in her hand.

"Meow," she finally says.

D.H. sees this, and chortles. He closes the cupboard. His moustache falls and he sheds his Chaplin gear. He comes back to the couch and picks up a piece of chicken. Nan takes it from him. She looks into his eyes and smiles. D.H. is pleased, she thinks. She puts the wing ding down. Using a phrase that he taught her, Nan signs that *he is her friend, and that she is his friend.* She doesn't know how to finish what she wants to say, that they will be friends, *always and forever.* She begins to reach for the pad, but D.H. picks it up. He takes the pencil from behind his ear, and scratches something out. He hands the pad to her.

"And we will always be friends," Nan reads. He's underlined the fourth word, and

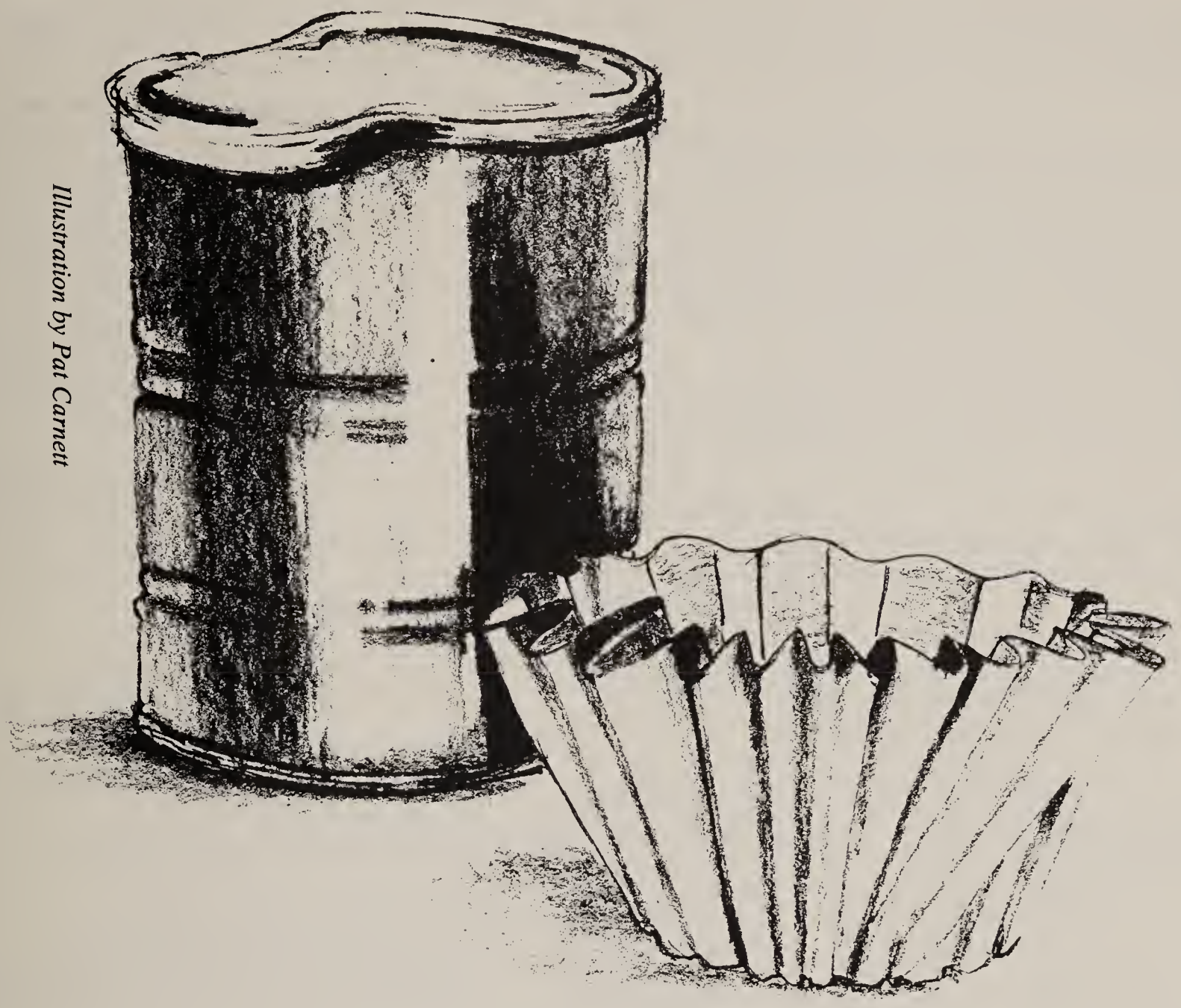


Illustration by Pat Carnett

he points at it.

"Best friends?" D.H. asks. His voice is frighteningly clear. "Best friends?"

Nan looks around the dim cabin, at the orange flames lapping at the stove window. The bedroom door is open and the covers on the bed are tousled. Clothes are bunched on the floor. In the living room, wood is stacked next to the stove in a tall, leaning pile. The kitchen is dominated by dirty dishes, styrofoam containers, beer bottles. Outside, she sees Sam and Butch running toward the barn, across the stomped-down snow. As Harold sits back down next to her on the couch, it amazes her that he knew exactly what to say. But then again, D.H. has that ability: the gift for putting words in the right order. She wishes that she had the same gift because as she sinks into the couch, all she can do is absorb the silence of wood crackling, water hissing, wind howling and snow ticking against the plastic window sheets.

Then, he taps her on the shoulder. Nan turns, and looks at him. He puts the pencil down on the TV tray. Deliberately, D.H. makes letters with his fingers. First it's an *I.* He holds it, two crossed fingers, and looks in Nan's eyes. Then he continues with a *T* followed by an *S,* each one taking about five seconds. "It's," he says. Then, he makes an *N* and an *O* and *T.* These letters come a little faster, each taking about three seconds. "Not," he says, raising his eyebrows slightly, "not." Nan nods slightly. She focuses on his gnarled fingers, the strong nails that are turning white with the pressure. They seem to have trouble, but they form a *Y,* and an *O,* followed by a *U* and an *R.* Harold sees that Nan is understanding, and he says, "Your, your."

The fourth word happens quickly. All five letters come in three, maybe four seconds: *F-A-U-L-T.* Nan looks up at D.H. and feels her face melting. He flashes *fault* again, and Nan nods and hears him struggle aloud with the word. She picks up the pencil and puts it to the pad. D.H. cannot write about that day, has always used his fingers to talk about it. She writes out the phrase *IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.* Unlike Harold's jumbled writing, the letters are tall, almost proud. She shows the sentence to D.H. He barely nods his head, then watches as she flips the pencil over. The black lead point is at a forty-five degree angle. Nan presses the fat pink eraser against the paper. As she slowly erases, removing the *Y* until there is nothing at all left of it, the phrase becomes their phrase and Nan knows that she is beginning to finally learn the alphabet.

Andre M. LaPalme lives in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Coffee

My not-so-close friends, the lovers, met at a bar—a coffee bar,
where they sipped similar Brazilian blends night after night,
discussing the virtues of bitterness and the horrors of pop.

When the date had been set, and the engraved invitations printed,
four bridesmaids spent a week personally staining each with a coffee mug,
so that each invite had a brown ring circling the bride's and groom's names.

The ceremony smelled of cinnamon toast. The female attendants
wore soft chestnut dresses, their auburn hair pulled back,
held in place by mahogany sequins and beads.
The happy couple received no crystal.
Instead they had registered for trendy clay mugs,
designed in South America,
of which they were lavishly greeted with sixteen.

There was no champagne toast, only an after-dinner chat
featuring the groom's favorite flavor—hazelnut.
Then a fierce dance, barefoot and loose, and the crash.

After, fifteen women scrubbed the china,
soiled with a chocolate-dirt mixture, until dawn,
when far away the bride and groom awoke
to the smell of a hotel's fancy morning brew.

—Karen J. Bunch
Winooski, Vermont

Berceuse

Sleep gently with the floating rhythm
Seeking out the lilt of graceful ease
Do not think, my little one, on sadnesses behind
But drift into a world your eyes don't see
Night will steal from the corners at daybreak
And you will need to lift your groggy head
But until then, my darling, take your pillow
Embrace your comforter & rock your id
And I will lie beside you still & quiet
Will stroke your hair & be the silent lover
We will together beckon soft repose
And trust the warmth where tender spirits hover
In & out & thru the skin & breathe
Into your nostrils slumbersome sighs
To weave their dreams of peaceful respite
Until the morning begs of you its tithes
Here is your cushion & my arms inviting
Lie you down & lean against my skin
Curl within the crook of this lithe opus
Till I can greet you with the sun again

—Joyce Michelin
Hammond, Indiana

Rocking Chair

Of all the pleasures
I have known in my rocking chair
The greatest one by all measures
Is the one alone, in the dark, when I stare
Out into the dimly lit stair
And descry that shadow:
Growing, pausing and then rising
Like the morning sunshine. Your coming,
To end my wavy loneliness
Like the serene trough between two waves,
Is my greatest rocking pleasure.

—Daniel F. Kligman
Brooklyn, New York

Lake Angelus

Marketing brochure:
"Almost untouched by human feet—
waiting for yours."

No medical refuse would dare wash up here.
No garbage scow shadows its harbor.
No refugees, exiles. No undesirables.

An underground channel from Styx
feeds this inland lake like Grecian glass
pouring ambrosia. You can tell by the frothiness
of its white caps.

Of course! Seraphim would troll
their feet here, where weather never varies
at the resort of angels.

On layover from Valhalla we are sure
they surf the currents: electric and pure
in this ice-water Celsius only angels could love.

Here, we are careful not to disturb driftwood
or dragonfly, the rare chest-high wetland grass tufts
placed just so: like postcards on the icebox in January.

We do not bring our hot-dog roasting needs, our flagrant
triangled beach balls, volley nets
where human voices could bruise the surf's roar.
We let the perfect curve of this cove like a wing
shoulder us into silence.

Gabriel and Michael sign no autographs.
Wear the jazziest shades.

—Josie Kearns
Ann Arbor, Michigan

My Easter Egg

The egg and I were close as corn,
Confirmed in friendship every morn
With drippy bacon on the side
And toast with butter slathered wide.

No challenge to Depression's fates,
Then we complied with emptied plates;
No money for frivolities,
But we could eat and dress to please.

But now a different order rules,
For arteries choked by grease, and fools
Who stuffed my face and mind with food,
So surgeons stripped them and the mood.

The love affair with eggs is gone;
It's different as each passing dawn.
But Easter is a holiday—
I eat an egg after I pray.

—Henry White
Crown Point, Indiana

Loser's Villanelle

Just being a person isn't enough anymore.
Like the five-flight walk-up:
Cute as heck when you're twenty.

Then it gets scary fast—
that's how poor people live.
Just being a person isn't enough anymore.

You as a college drop-out;
your "checkered career as a student":
Cute as heck when you're twenty.

"Cute" is for puppies and kittens.
No closets or tub in your flat.
Just being a person isn't enough anymore.

The retired father snug in Florida
scolds his artist daughter:
Cute as heck when you're twenty;

Painting won't pay the bills.
Recession-proof's the goal.
Just being a person isn't enough anymore.
Cute as heck when you're twenty.

—Mary Winters
New York, New York

reflection

You'd think, at the graduation party, the victory
was his—his jubilance was that apparent. Not so,
He said, I simply recognize the impact of my cash flow. He
ruminated of now pursuing HIS dream, set aside
Long ago to fulfill parental duties—he had wished to
study classical guitar or harmonica, but
Could not decide between them.

Upon reflection, his last born suggested the
choice should be harmonica, in that way he reasoned
The older man could not accompany himself
singing.

—Barbara Drakis
Merrillville, Indiana

Assignment: Write About Your Life On Campus

An older student
Among many,
On campus life:
I have not any.

—Evelyn Ronco
Munster, Indiana

Glory Be

Glory be,
Is this me?
The vagabond
Who lately donned
Futility,
Now forging ahead
And out of bed,
Ready to run
And catch the sun.

—John Binns
Yorkshire, England



Illustration by Virginia Deweese



POETRY IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

Robert Cooke continues his search for the poetry of physics—right now through a philosophy of corrosion. His immersion in the everyday workplace of a refinery necessitates his involvement in the material world, but through poetry he attempts to expose the unseen life of the inanimate objects around him.

Mr. Cooke was born in Hammond, grew up in Munster and attended Hammond High, then Indiana University where he graduated with a degree in political science. He joined the Peace Corps and taught basic living skills in Brazil for two years, capping off that experience by traveling around South America for a short time.

Mr. Cooke began writing poetry when he was twenty-two, keeping a journal of his Peace Corps experiences and drawing on his concern for harmony between humanity and nature. Some of his early poetry was published in the *Southern Poetry Review.*

His interest in writing and fishing led him to graduate study at the University of Oregon, where he earned a Master's Degree in Fine Arts. From there he moved to Illinois and taught creative writing, composition and poetry at Western Illinois University, finding time to write and be published. The free time he had to pursue his own writing is what he misses most about the academic world, for today he finds himself caught up in the industrial world.

Employed at a local refinery and father of three, Mr. Cooke has seen his writing time progressively shrink. He has spent the last few months developing instructional materials and teaching specialized work skills, utilizing his writing and teaching abilities in a completely different way. He wonders if this prosaic use of writing has influenced his poetic inclination because he finds himself doing more revising and rewriting than creating at this point in his life. Since he writes to convey ideas and feelings, not the literal sense of things, he makes artful what he finds surrounding him. His latest endeavor is exploring the use of different fonts and topographical elements in his poetry.

Mr. Cooke reads a variety of material, from the *Tao of Physics* to Walt Whitman, and currently subscribes to the *Paris Review* and *American Poetry Review.* He finds his own audience very important, and whenever he can, attends the First Friday Poets' meeting to share his own poetry and critique others' work. Although he admires James Joyce, he feels that poetry should be accessible to many, so he likes to "bounce his poetry off other people."

In 1992, Mr. Cooke was honored by North Carolina University at Greensboro in its 25th-Anniversary issue of the *Greensboro Review.* One of his most recent poems, "Workgloves," appears in the latest issue of *Southern Poetry Review.*

Mr. Cooke quotes T. S. Eliot as saying, "All good poetry comes from the streets," but it appears that good poetry can come from a refinery, too. His poetry exposes the inanimate objects around him, bringing them to life for people who would not otherwise even notice.

Evelyn Ronco lives in Munster, Indiana.

Relief Valve Installation

The RV sings out across the tank fields in high "Gs."
Last winter all night it sang
like a coyote in mountains covered in snow.
His neck stretched up
in the night-shift landscape
of oil towers and high-heat furnaces,
eyes closed in a red metal sky,
the constant and clear note
from him,
bolted to the top of the painted gray
disabled reciprocating pump,
shut-down, quiet as grass,
the piston arm unpinned, seals leaking,
as if from bruised lips.
The night starry and cold.

Wilderness Cabin, Taking The Place

My father's cabin
in red and yellow wet October.
He would sit up late,
facing the cold window,
the lantern always unlit.
I could see him clearly
from across the room.

How the moon shone
on his face like a hundred mile lake.
He never knew
how ancient fish filled the room,
and that he was as old
in life and work as the clogs of earth,
and the bay's exposed shale
upon which drifted snow shines.
The next year he died.
Tonight old carp
come through the window
as light comes through the eye,
schools of gold perch circle
as food for the muskies
sliding through the grass like eels.
I sit up late,
the moon in the window,
my face and hands
lit up like stones,
my father circling
through the grass, gold as carp.

Last Days at the Cabin

A hundred moths fly at the lantern.
A dozen unlit and boarded cabins
follow the shoreline
like the shadows of jackpines
and outcropped boulders.
I hold the lantern over my head and watch.
Gray and brown moths fly out of the dark
appearing from nowhere
like cinders falling from shooting stars,
pinging on the globe.
I set the lantern
at the end of the dock and sit on the stairs.
The moored boats strain
at each small wave,
the ropes creak like cottonwoods.
In a month I'll come back
to shutter the windows and doors,
turn off the gas, drain the tanks.
Everything will have to be emptied
like today—already a thousand moths
have fallen into the water.

The Refinery Air House

The southern windows are still covered
with newspaper for summer shade.
All day it's near zero.
A yellow winter light
shines on the flat grime
of the machinery floor.
Dense, enclosed—the air
house in winter is heavy with metal dust:
piston arms clack
like played spoons,
rows of empty lube
cans stand five deep,
the caps missing.
Oil drools down their punched-in sides.
The wheel of the compressor,
big as a ship's wheel, turns
through another year, breathing
condensed air into the pipes
cut through the outside wall.
At the far end,
above the machinist's cabinet,
the window is left open,
where snow falls in,
the knock wrenches and sledge hammers turned white.

—Robert P. Cooke
Highland, Indiana

THE NAMING OF *OH?*

by Ted Calvin

Rock Music, in all of its manifestations, has been subject to the *ins* and *outs* of fashion just as clothes have.

In the sixties, there were bands like *Strawberry Alarm Clock, Procal Harem, Quicksilver Messenger Service* and *Velvet Underground;* the seventies had *Funkadelic, Bee Gees, Ramones* (please forgive me for listing them together), *Doobie Brothers* and *DEVO;* the eighties had stuff like *Duran Duran, Depeche Mode, Madness, Oingo Boingo, New Order* and *The Sugar Cubes.*

Oh? is the band of which I am a member, and which I helped name. The title may or may not fit in with today's current rock and roll name fashions—but I wouldn't know. It was not chosen for that reason.

Does any band choose its name for that reason? I cannot answer that for other bands, but I can answer for us.

To really understand the meaning of *Oh?* to the band, you need to know of our quest for a name, and our stumbling upon what may be a spiritual moniker.

Oh? consists of three members: Ken Withrow, Steve Hartley and me, Ted Calvin. We met at school, attracted by our similar tastes and common threads.

One vein which runs in common with us is constant social evolution. That is, a willfulness to expand upon, and explore new territories of our social bond; an experimentive sort of dabbling about with social pretexts, and ethical *do's* and *don'ts.*

Surely, this happens with any and all social groups—but with *Oh?* it is often the focus, causing a sort of restlessness within.

On the surface, this is reflected in a preference for out-of-context dress, constant slapstick humor and moodiness. Ultra-progressive music, and obtuse artistic preferences in general are the fuels for the band's individual minds.

As a result, the big questions of life are looming ever huge and impassable on the horizon. These questions can be painful to the tender human mind, which commonly turns to religion for succor. *Oh?*, in order to retain its flexibility, does not adhere to a specific faith or philosophy, but rather embraces whichever is more suitable for the moment.

In the music, this is reflected as "shapeshifting," meaning the tendency for instrumental interludes to transform in tone, mood and rhythm over the course of time. It is a spontaneous, meandering thing, and none in the band knows really how it comes to be, or why. Instead, we concentrate on going with it as best we can.

This is not exactly an event exclusive to *Oh?.* In fact, it has been the source of magic for many instrumental improvisers over the ages. It is musical exploration; a quest where that which is sought is not known, exactly. It is a search for the likeness of a dream which cannot be remembered in full—a dream which, though now a blank page, holds with it the memory of something good. It *was* good, and if only it could be found again...

It is a quest for beauty, wherein amid the pre-planned context of a song, the band embarks on an unknown step forward. Although usually nothing happens, sometimes there is magic—something wonderful to behold. A space in the fabric of things where there lies something that people can see, but not hold; pass but not remember. All then that stays with the heart is a feeling, the knowledge that something occurred, something to fuel the dreaming, and inspire hope; something that brings you to looking just a little bit further over the shoulder of life.

We have surprised ourselves with this phenomenon on more than one occasion, prompting us to create a name in this mysterious event's honor.

This, and our unanimous love of *gnomes, faeries* and other ethereal/elemental beings, prompted the name *Phooka Jig. Phookas* were known as shapeshifting ghosts, or even *sidhe* among some Celtic folklore sources. It seemed all too appropriate that the band adopt this as a term of both endearment and description. After all, the things that happened during play were often as mysterious and inexplicable as a ghost!

However, as we were soon to discover, it was often a frustrating and time-consuming process to describe our name. Commonly, people will associate negative ideas to the whole genre of the word *faerie.* Not only that, but it was still next to impossible to use the word to describe *Oh?'s* style. People just don't seem to want to conceptualize such allegories—unless it is applied to economics or some other dehydrated "adult" subject.

Furthermore, such old lore is not in common use. Who was the last person you met who believed in elves? That the folklore is fading from our culture is a sad notion, but all too true.

So we continued on our quest.

Dozens of names were tried on for size, most being cheap imitations of the current pop-trend name styles, not worth mentioning—or even remembering. Many were clever and intelligent, but didn't quite fit what we were. Take, for instance, *The Jello Mold Trio Rhythm and Blues Review.* Certainly jolly good fun, but just a bit unwieldy. Another appellation that was just a tad bit unsuitable was *The Subcultural Nomads.*

In this context, subcultural does not have anything to do with the term *subculture.* It has been slightly customized.

Ken grew up in California. There, among other hobbies, he became enmeshed in the world of skateboarding (which, incidentally, very easily takes the title of *subculture).* He spoke to me of some fellows, rather belligerent blokes by nature, who joined the skating

community. They became decent at the art, but before long departed for a new hobby. Ken watched them as they moved from kick to kick, never making one phase permanent. They were nomads, but not in the physical sense. They stuck together through every tour of culture, never allowing themselves to be absorbed. They were nomads of culture: *The Subcultural Nomads.*

It's a neat tag, but it was not us. We were not *subcultural nomads.* If anything, we were *cultural couch potatoes!* Now, how is that for a name?

So we continued on our quest, fitting, refitting, digging, dragging, panning, postulating, pick-axing and premeditating. We really needed a title.

It was Steve who finally stumbled upon the name. Perhaps it was in a conversation... it was definitely in a car when he first turned to me and said, "Yeah, why don't we just call it *Oh?*"

"We could do that..." I replied, "and, why don't we leave it a question: *Oh?"*

"Yeah!" said Steve.

And so it was.

And now the band holds in its sobriquet the elements of surprise, skepticism, curiosity, challenge and just about any other inflection you can come up with. *Oh?* leaves it open to interpretation.

Oh? is a good name for us. It is a healthy name. It is just beyond the band's grasp as a descriptive element, and is thus quite as unrestrictive as you get. It helps us develop an active repertoire for our promotion because it does not retain a fixed meaning. It allows room to grow.

Not only that, but it becomes a game to tell people about it. They will ask, "So what is your band called?"

We reply, *"Oh."*

They say, "Huh?"

We say, with a more assertive stance, *"Oh?"*

They ask, *"Oh?"*



Illustration by Ken Withrow

"Exactly!" we reply with a grin.

Despite this, the name *Phooka Jig,* which was regarded affectionately by all the members, has not lost its potency. The band still loves the concept—the perhaps dark romance of comparing itself to an entity whose mythos has nearly disappeared.

Even with the success of the title *Oh?,* deep inside is the glowing ember which we tried to embody with the name *Phooka Jig:* the mist in the woods at night, under a sky so huge it seems too big to be real... a light under a log, disappearing with too direct a glance... the sound of laughing voices, and far-off music in an indeterminate direction...

But, alas, it is just like the being it describes—far closer to the spirit than to the material—far closer to being forgotten than to being embraced.

Ted Calvin lives in Highland, Indiana.

Sleepovers

In my flannel sleepover pajamas
And pink terry cloth bathrobe,
I sit with Julie on her mother's bed
And witness the pre-date ritual
Of dimestore makeup
Taking place at a tangerine
Painted dressing table.
Her mother is priestess
Of this mystical rite,
Her once pale face
Becoming increasingly bright
With Primrose Pink
And Firehouse Red.
When at last the colorful facade
Smiles in the mirror,
The star of tonight's production
Chooses just the right shade
Of shimmering fuscia polish,
And with a sly glance at us,
Carefully paints the nails of her toes.

—Christine Shrader
Gary, Indiana

Atom Bombs

The red hills of Salina
Were reflected in her hair.
Nearby, under government's eye,
A cold ugliness grew.

It was covertly released
Into the air,
And entered the bodies
Of all who lived there.

When forty years had passed,
Her black hair now white,
She was awarded a sum
To compensate for her life.

—Emily Florence
Baldwin, New York



Illustration by Rhede Rhodes

No Wings, No Clouds, No Halos

I had a dream
of my father.
He came to my subconscious
holding an infant gently in his arms.
"What a pretty baby!" I said to him.
"Thank you," he answered.
"It is my daughter."
We were in the house
I grew up in;
the house he lived in
all his life.
He gazed down at the baby,
with his deep blue eyes
not even recognizing me
standing before him
as an adult.
He looked as he did
40 years earlier;
a strong young man,
happy, fulfilled,
and totally absorbed
in raising his family.
He was where he wanted to be.
The dream was so real,
I could have reached out and touched him!
I wish I had.
I wonder,
in his dark, silent night,
if he ever
dreams of me.

—Deborah Bowman
Lake St. Louis, Missouri

A Recollection

They were poor folks.
She was shin-deep in daffodils,
Her print dress
Blooming faded flowers
Like hand-me-down faces.
There's a look
That bridges poverty,
Holds-on proud through generations.
I saw it in a face once—
The history and hunger:
Lean and proud mother
Of a daughter who picked daffodils
For fifty cents an hour—
Fifty cents
An hour not her own
In flower time.

—Phillip T. Egelston
Jonesboro, Illinois

Digging In

I don't go along with Germaine Greer's
menopausal dirge. I'm no played-out vein,
no boarded-up dig. Not that all's gold
to my pick and shovel. There's silver,
lead, copper, zinc too. And scrap to toss,
heaps of it, maybe some day's treasure.
I've moved a lot of rock since my body ore
was reckoned too old to mine. The secret life
of rock is ageless, and I'm getting on to
its secret, every day a little less ignorant.

True, this is a treacherous place, formed
tens of millions of years ago on a fault line,
under stress. But treacherous is wealthy,
and I keep extending the vein into
the deep visuals of its interior,
slowly, painfully, tediously hollowing out
levels, making tunnel connections: hunches
sometimes working better than well-laid plans.

I rest my outmoded renewed hand tools
on an accident of amethyst.
Underground has no horizon.
But in the craggy crystals of blue-violet
I am on the cutting edge of mountains.

—Ida Fasel
Denver, Colorado

Stone Heart Eulogy

There is no morphology in this matrix.
No milky-breasted, soft-curved, lute-playing Greek goddess of matriarchy,
nor age-wise Athena etched deep within this form.
No nurturing angel in this marble-like hardness.
The sharpest diamond scalpel,
and the child's rubber-point knife would be equally blunted;
the coarsest sandpaper, the smoothest silk would shred
against this gnarled geography.
Cold-hard marble is soft sand cooked in the kiln of the earth.
And some long-ago childhood fury persists in her rage-torn heart.
If she posed for a statue the truest likeness would be Cronos, the child devourer.
I, the youngest, must be prepared to do the expected,
from her other issue—nothing; they are blameless.

Comes time the eulogy, and it will come soon,
I will form a congregation of one,
standing alone by the marble marker pretending to mourn,
listening to the droning of a hired holy man
who will have nothing to say except to chant by rote,
while a cloud-covered heaven sings in deadest silence.
Marking time all around me will loll an audience of bored grave diggers.

Half her substance must be mine, that is the natural order of things.
The best I can hope for is that only barest life was passed on,
and not wisdom, nor love nor lack of love.
Some are blessed with fond maternal memories, some are not.
But one survives. One walks away.
One creates.
A sharp imagination can chisel out of the matrix of stone-hard reality
an infinite number of tailor-made comforting forms.

—Richard Fein
Brooklyn, New York

Sweet *Love*

Oh, sweet drug come to raise me from the dead,
Unbury first my heart, and last my head.
For I have lain as Beauty lay—asleep.
Alone with but the darkness there to keep.

But darkness has its tentacles intwined,
And ghosts have reigned a lifetime in my mind.
And I would run from what I'm drawn to
That I might rest alone, and not with you.

Yet I recall sunlight beaming through trees
And forests dark though rich—in mysteries.
I recall flowers, and thundering shores,
The screech of the gull, and a thousand more.

And I would recall you if you could me
From unrestful sleep and wasting beauties.

—Kathleen Natiello
Griffith, Indiana

CREAM CAKES

by Steve Poleskie

The boy looked down at the slices of bright orange mango on his plate. He hated mango. It was the third time this week the waiter had brought them mango for dessert.

"Aaron, eat your mango, you cannot leave the table until you have eaten everything." It was his mother reminding him what his father had told him before they had left home. The man had confided to his son that they were going on a trip, and that it might last a long time. His father had said that things were going to be a little different for a while, and that he should be a big boy and make the best of things and listen to his mother. "Above all," he had advised his only child, "be sure to eat everything that is put on your plate, the time may come when you may not know where your next meal will be."

The boy's eyes circled the other tables in the pink-painted dining room. Most of the other people staying at the pension had not eaten their mangoes but had pushed them aside and were now having coffee. Aaron's father bent over their table, clawing with a spoon at the last orange fibers still clinging to the bright green skin of his own mango. "If my father loves this fruit so much he can have mine," the boy opined. "Why can't we have cream cakes for dessert, like we had at home?"

Aaron looked over his father's shoulder out the large double window. Buzzards glided by without sound in the hot blue sky. Through the palm trees and past the red tile roofs of the city he could see the harbor, and beyond that the sea. They had come here last week on a boat. He hated this pension; it was too hot, it smelled bad, and he couldn't understand anyone. But it was better than being on the boat. The boat had swayed and rocked and the weather had rained all the time. There were cream cakes on the boat but he had been too sick to eat them.

"Eat your mango, Aaron, it's good for you," his father admonished, wiping the remains of his own mango from his chin with the hairy back of his right hand, at the same time adjusting his yarmulke with his left.

The boy looked away from his father, aware that he was also wearing a similar head cover that his mother always embarrassingly fastened to his head with a woman's hair pin. "Why did he have to wear this little hat now?" he thought. This past week he and his mother had walked all over the city looking for cream cakes. They hadn't found any. The shopkeepers all told them it was too hot for cream cakes, that they would spoil. Boys had pointed at his yarmulke and said things he couldn't understand. No one here wore these hats. He felt strange, people had been staring at him.

When they had lived in Warsaw, a lot of men and boys in his neighborhood had worn these hats. But when they had moved to Vienna, he and his father had only worn their little embroidered head coverings in the house. They wore regular hats when they went out there and while they were on the trip. Now that they were here he had been made to wear his yarmulke again.

Aaron wished he were back in Vienna, that's where they had the best cream cakes. He remembered Warsaw, too, although he had been very young when they had lived there. Not that he was that much older now, but he seemed to feel that time had been moving faster since he and his parents had left Vienna. There was an urgency about his parents that had carried over to him. Something was happening that his inchoate mind could not fully comprehend. It seemed as if his world had grown out of control, spreading out far beyond the confines of his backyard, doubling and tripling itself into an unknown dimension.

In Warsaw he had had a friend named John. John's mother, Magda, had been the cook for his family. She always made fruit pies for dessert. Aaron hated fruit pies. They had a pear tree and an apple tree in the backyard of their house in Warsaw. In the summer the over-ripe fruit fell from the tree and lay on the ground rotting. Aaron liked to lie in the grass on his stomach, watching the wasps and ants dining on the succulent brown sores of the smashed fruit. Once, when the season was nearing fall, Magda had come into the garden, and finding she could not reach any more apples from the tree, had gathered a handful from the ground. Aaron watched from the yellowing grass as she sat on the back steps, the sun on her bare legs, carefully cutting the good from the rotten, driving the wasps from the bowl clasped between her knees with her knife and the back of her hand.

Aaron remembered that evening when, after the main course, Magda brought out a magnificent apple tart with golden brown crust. His father had taken an unusually large slice and proclaimed with a grand gesture that this was without a doubt the finest apple tart he had ever tasted. The cook smiled and blushed and his father had given her a strange smile back. Aaron noticed his father's smile, a kind of expression he had not seen on the man's face before. He had looked at his mother, who was taking her tart in small, choked bites. Her face wore an expression as if she were somewhere else. He had looked down at his own piece of tart. His eyes seemed to blur. When they re-focused, his tart appeared to be full of rotten apples filled with worms and ants and wasps. The rancid pulp ran across his plate, oozing from beneath the crisp brown crust. Aaron rushed from the table to the kitchen, where he threw up in the sink. His mother had held his head.



From a forest in Rhineland - Palatinate, Germany
Circa 1964—Courtesy of Laura Ruben

He never again ate fruit pies, and his father did not force him. Shortly thereafter he recalled his mother and father having a violent argument. He remembers this because they rarely fought. Two weeks later, John's mother went away and a new cook came. He liked the new cook because she made him cream cakes for dessert. She wasn't as pretty as Magda, though. He wasn't allowed to play with John any more either.

Aaron missed John, and thought about him often. John had been his first real friend. He had known a boy in Vienna. Hans was German. He was older than Aaron and tended to bully him. Hans explained that his father had told him that the Germans were a superior race. It was the duty of the superior person to educate the inferior. Aaron was not only from Poland, he was also a Jew and, therefore, doubly inferior. It did not matter that his mother was Catholic.

One day Hans had coerced Aaron, with a promise of two of his mother's cream cakes, to undress and stand naked in front of a mirror in Hans' parents' bedroom. Aaron remembered the room, the crossed swords on the wall, the red, black and white flag with the same symbol the men in the streets wore on their armbands. Hans had stood next to him, also naked, and had educated him. "Look!" he said. "Look at my strong, tanned, muscular body. Look at you, pale, flabby, weak!" With his finger he had picked at every mark and blemish on Aaron's fat white skin. Then he took hold of Aaron's penis with his left hand, and holding his own with his right had forced the two members together for a comparison. "Look! Mine is beautiful, whole, yours is ugly, mutilated. When you were a baby, they cut the end off yours. It doesn't matter that your mother is Catholic; when they cut the end off they made you a Jew."

When Aaron's father had learned of the continuing series of beatings that his son had been receiving from Hans as part of his education, he had forbade the two boys from seeing one another. Shortly thereafter the family had left on their journey.

"Aaron!" His father had caught him daydreaming. "Finish your mango, it's almost time for the news."

Every evening all the adults gathered in the musty green parlor and listened to the news on the wireless. The men smoked cigarettes or cigars, while the women knitted or talked. As he was the only child staying in the pension, Aaron had to stay with the adults. He flipped through old magazines which he could not read. He could not understand the radio either, nor could most of the others, so his father usually translated.

The boy sliced a piece of fruit and shoved it into his mouth and began chewing. He could feel the pulpy fibers lodging between his wide-spaced front teeth.

"The German Army has taken Warsaw!" the waiter announced, rushing into the dining room. The news had just come on the radio.

A murmur of excitement circled the room as the few remaining guests hurriedly left their tables for the parlor.

His parents got up and followed the others. Aaron's father stopped and turned, his voice raised over the crackle of the wireless. "Finish your mango, Aaron, and then come join us," he said, and with a hint of despair, repeated the waiter's message, "The German Army has taken Warsaw!"

Aaron waited until his father had taken his place in the parlor amid the group listening to the broadcast. Then the boy rolled the food in his mouth into a ball with his tongue and spat it onto his plate. He felt relieved. He carried the dish into the kitchen and scraped the orange mass and what remained of the untouched fruit into the garbage.

"The German Army has taken Warsaw?" Aaron wondered what this implied. "It must be good news," he reasoned, "Germans love cream cakes." He had seen German officers in their smart uniforms eating cream cakes in the shops his mother had taken him to in Vienna. "They can teach John's mother to make cream cakes. Maybe we shall be going back to Warsaw, then I shall never have to eat mango again."

Contented with this thought, the boy went into the dimly-lit parlor and joined the circle huddled around the glow of the radio's dial.

Steve Poleskie lives in Ithaca, New York.

A Small Yard

No roaming ranch with a running brook
No luscious farm or woodland free
None do I possess, none at all.

A house a yard in front and back
Is all I own but nothing lack.

No wooded lot or trees of Oak
No wild terrain no white-tailed
Deer, no horse, no cow
No antlered antelope
None of these do I possess.

Just a house with yard around
A cherry tree and a
Long-eared rabbit hound.

No lot or a lake nor a hut in the hills
No horse or hog or lamb
None of these can I call home.

Just a small yard and a
White picket fence
A cat and a dog and
My wife's two cents.

—Bernie Bernstein
Niles, Illinois

Neighbors

There is a house next door
as big as the taj mahal
but not as nice
with lots of people
coming and going
like 1600 pennsylvania avenue
but not even as nice as that
They are an odd race
with tiedye shirts and out of tune guitars
As a kid, i'd have run from such people
As a teenager, i might have joined them
for a little while anyway
Now i just look across the fence
(grateful that there is one)
and shake my head and
pray they sell their bongocongos
at the next yard sale and
that their broken down vans
will break down somewhere else.

—Larry Crist
Seattle, Washington

Doing Good, Practically

If you are unkind to me,
I'll turn the other cheek
And repay you with all kindness
While acting mild and meek.
You'll think I'm being good to you
But realize this instead:
My true intent in these good works is
To heap coals upon your head.

(Proverbs 25:22; Romans 12:20)

—Evelyn Ronco
Munster, Indiana

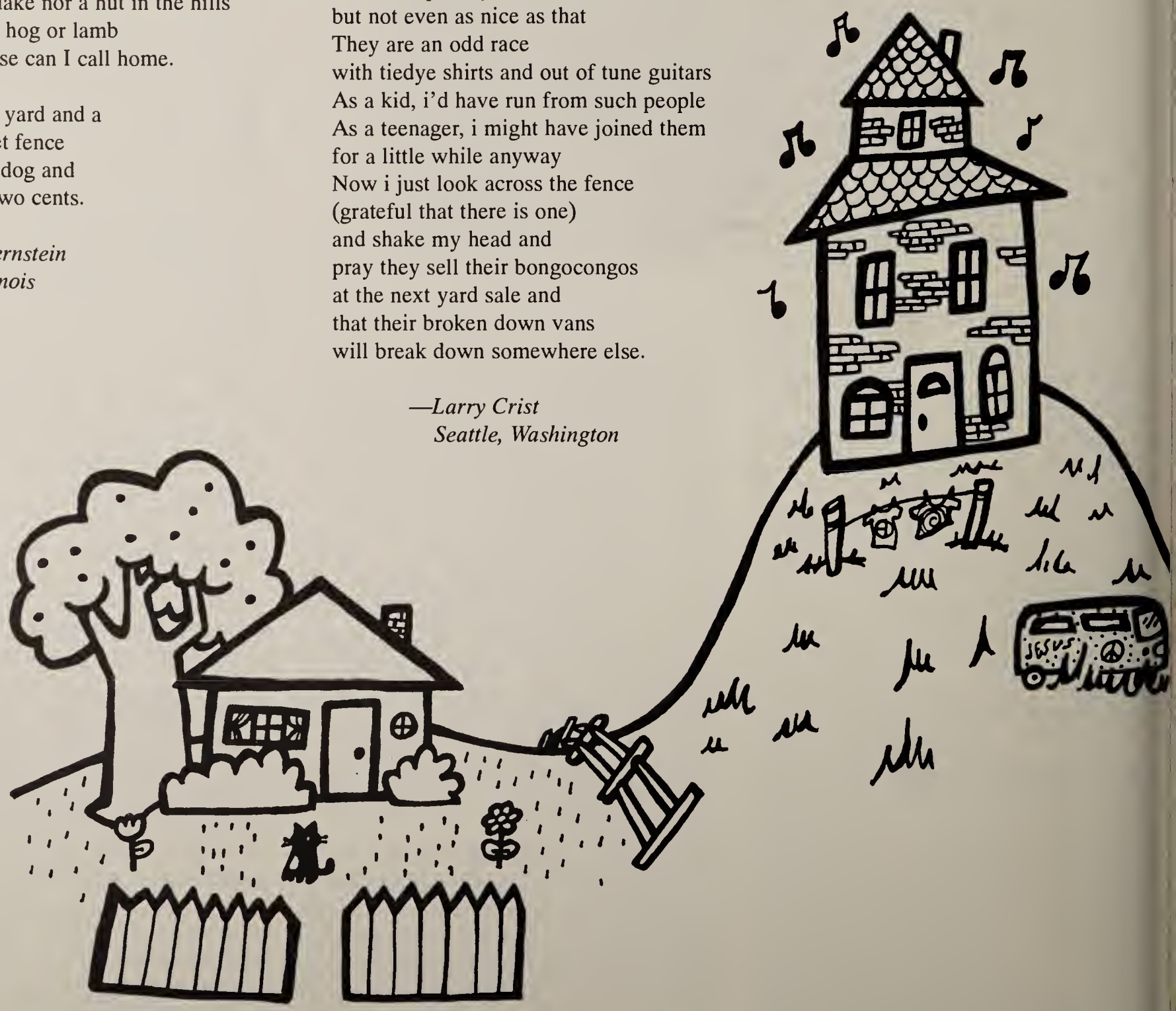


Illustration by Rhede Rhodes



Photo by Pamela Hunter

Candlelight

Candle lights in her windows
beckon guests who never
come
signal friends who fail to
stop
summon lovers who no longer
remember
bid relatives who seldom
visit
call neighborhood children lost in
play.

Candle lights in her windows
lidless eyes
search, touch
burn
with the warmth
that still resides
inside
alone.

—Deborah A. Reynolds
Terre Haute, Indiana

The Woods Last Stand

Woods declare a moratorium
on the cancerous advance of progress.
Here, the sanctity of trees prevails.
Plain dirt paths
wind their way through valley stillness,
broken only by the cushioned sound
of falling walnuts
and distant pheasant calls.
Sun weaves its shafts through maple shadows,
and airborne squirrels
fling beech nuts into autumn.

No winding concrete here.
No engine sounds. No toxic fumes.
No bulldozed space, trees pushed aside.

The woods is its own best friend. . . and mine.
The poet's last, best hope to capture in words
rhythms of the earth.

What better hope to thwart the tide of progress
than to let the greenbrier grow untamed
and the ferns wind down to winter,
fallen trees decay in place,
and white-tailed deer play hide and seek
in shadows of the moon.

—Harding Stedler
Wheelersburg, Ohio

THE GHOST AND I, AND THE THING IN THE BACKYARD THAT SWALLOWED UP THE SOUNDS AND SCARED THE CRAP OUT OF US



A number of changes have been made in the nine months since I bought my new home. The operative word here is "new." The core of this two-story, rambling monster of a house is actually about 150 years old. Additions were made as the years passed; the latest being done sometime in the 1950's when the attic had been transformed into a bedroom for the then owners' two little girls.

Even though the house has been repainted, patched and pampered with a little TLC in the form of getting rid of the musty smell in the basement and the mildew in the bathroom, there's still one thing I haven't been able to budge—the ghost who came with the house and made his presence known about three days after I moved in. By then it was too late to get my down payment back and find another house sans ghost. But the ghost, Mr. G to those who know and love him, did get rid of Lance, an ex-boyfriend, who only wanted a place to hang his pocket pen protector (he's an accountant, you see). That little battle of wills had been a wonder to witness and, of course, the best man...er, ghost had won.

Mr G still tries to join me in the shower—it seems he has this thing for water and he hasn't quite mastered turning on the faucets by himself yet. Otherwise, we have settled into a routine that we're comfortable with unless I bring someone home Mr. G takes a disliking to. Then things get a little iffy.

I have acquired a renter by the name of Brian "Butch" Braswell, the 23-year-old brother of Amalie, a good friend of mine. He rents the small apartment attached to the garage and he comes in handy when I need something heavy moved or lifted. Mr. G tries to help, too, but protoplasm just can't support anything heavier than a few ounces.

Back in the 1970's we would have called Butch macho. Now, I believe, he would be referred to as an alpha male. He stays at the gym so much I'm surprised they haven't renamed it "Brawny Butch's Workout Studio." The main reasons I like having him around are that he is a likeable guy, never pushy, and fun to be with. Oddly enough, he doesn't believe in Mr. G even though his sister and I have both told him all about our ghostly friend.

He says, "You've both been alone too long. Find yourselves a man and join the real world." That remark will tell you what I don't like about him—he thinks a man will cure anything from hemorrhoids to zits. It just proves that he hasn't met Lance yet.

Besides my renter, I've also acquired a full-grown boxer named Duke, who immediately took it upon himself to be my personal bodyguard. At first, Mr. G's presence disturbed Duke, but soon the ghostly comings and goings of the resident spirit failed to get a reaction from him, except for the cocking of one pointed ear.

While watching TV one night with Duke lying at my feet, I heard Mr. G traipse down the stairs and go out the back door. That wasn't unusual. In fact, he did it so frequently that I sometimes found myself wondering if there was a feminine ghost, somewhere out in the lilac bushes, that he liked to visit. Normally, he would be gone anywhere from thirty minutes to over an hour. Not this time—it was only a matter of seconds before he was back in the house, climbing the stairs. Duke raised his ears and listened, then turned to me as if to say, "What happened?" As I didn't know, I didn't answer.

A few minutes later, Duke decided he wanted to go outside to potty. When I opened the back door, he took one step over the threshold and then froze. His hackles rose and his ears went back. In mid-stride, he did a quick U-turn and nearly knocked me down getting back into the house. All I could do was stare at him and think: *dumb dog.*

"Come on, Duke, get your butt out this door. You're the one who wanted to go," I yelled after him as he took off towards the living room. I couldn't imagine what had gotten into him and decided to take a look outside.

It was a perfect Southern summer night—

or
THE GHOST AND I: PART DEUX

by Virginia A. Deweese



Illustrations by Rhede Rhodes

Duke and I had taken a walk earlier in the evening and we had thoroughly enjoyed it. Now, halfway across the backyard, a chill raced down and then up my back. I stopped and looked around me.

The leaves on the willow tree moved back and forth as though blowing in a gentle breeze. But I could hear no rustling. In fact, I couldn't hear anything at all—not tree frogs or cicadas, or even the traffic on the four-lane thoroughfare only two houses away.

I felt as though I were in a total vacuum...where only something so evil existed that my skin seemed to crawl. I knew whatever had swallowed up the sounds and scared both Duke and Mr. G wasn't something I wanted to meet face to face. Before you could yell, *help me, help me,* I was once again on the couch. Only this time, I shivered and shook so much my teeth rattled. Duke abandoned his place on the floor and jumped into my lap. He was quite a lot to handle as he weighs nearly sixty pounds, but I appreciated the contact. I needed to know that there was someone or something warm-blooded I could cling to while I tried to calm down.

About thirty minutes later, I still shivered but less violently. I heard Butch's signal on the front door. His is a distinctive knock of three short taps, a missed beat, and then two short taps. I yelled for him to use his key and come in. When he did, it only took him a few minutes to realize that something was wrong and only two more seconds to get the story out of me.

Then he laughed. "Audra, you and Amalie are going to be the death of me yet. See what believing in this ghost crap will do to you?" With disdain, he looked down at me from his slightly impressive height of five feet ten inches. "I'm going to go to the apartment. I'm not in the mood to hear any more ghost stories." And off he went, through the kitchen, down the hall, and out the back door.

It was so quiet you could hear the clock on the wall. Tick-tock. I waited for a scream. Tick-tock. Or even a bellow of rage. Tick-tock. Nothing. Tick-tock. Damn, I felt like an idiot. Tick-tock.

Suddenly, the back door slammed against the wall with a great whack. The oddest noises accompanied the door being shut and secured, but they weren't distinguishable. Had the evil from the backyard found its way into the house? Then "it" came towards the front of the house, running down the hall, through the kitchen, and into the living room. With my eyes closed, my arms full of Duke, and perilously perched on the back of the couch, I tried to bore through the wall behind me.

After several moments of silence except for heavy breathing, mine and someone else's, I opened my eyes just enough to take a peek. Butch stood there with three rifles, two handguns, several hunting knives and, like a Mexican bandito, two belts of ammo criss-crossing his well-built chest, which at that moment heaved with each breath he took. He tried to gasp out a word, but couldn't, and I saw that sweat had drenched his shirt and had become beaded above his upper lip. There was fear in his eyes. I thought I heard him mumble, "Thank you, God," but chalked it up to my imagination and the stress I'd been in for the last hour of so.

It did my ego good that it took him almost as long as it had taken me to calm down enough to talk about his experience.

"I was whistling when I heard across the yard." he began hesitantly. "I'd just inserted the door key when I felt as though something were breathing down my neck. God, I was so scared I don't know how I ever made it in the apartment, grabbed this stuff, and made it back to the house!" He shut his eyes and dropped his chin to his chest.

When the apology came, it was face-to-face. "I'm sorry, Audra. I won't ever doubt you or Amalie again even if you were to tell me you had fallen in love with a ghost and were going to have his baby. Believe me, all I'd ask is what kind of toys do baby ghosts like to play with."

I simply patted his hand because I understood exactly what he meant. My life had been turned upside down nine months ago and, from the looks of it, the next nine months, or nine years even, weren't going to be any different.

After deliberating for several months, I've decided to have an exorcism performed for whatever that "thing" was in the backyard. It hasn't chilled anyone or trembled leaves since that one night. But I don't want to take any chances. And, I also don't want Mr. G affected by the rites. So, Amalie and I have decided that he can stay with her and her children for a few days. She figures that the kids will love having him there, and I can always visit.

There's only one thing worrying me now. What am I going to do if the Baptist Church tells me they don't do exorcisms?!

Virginia A. Deweese lives in Hammond, Indiana.



Photos by John Kingsley

Autumnal Scene

Children drawn to piles of leaves
Walk stiff-legged through them,
Testing their depth
Like a plow in a new field.

Birds on wires watch us underfoot,
Perhaps pity our restriction,
Impatient to follow their routes
To adventurous lands far away.

The unchanging granite island base
Feels the spruce dig deep roots
For footholds against the gales
That take their kin each winter.

Drugstores replace suntan displays
With school supplies and mittens.
Meter maids sigh at departing tourists.
Street hawkers head south.

The convention of peers
Send youth to distant colleges,
Sweeping summer love away
More harshly than the ocean tide.

—Howard Prescott
Alexandria, Virginia

May 10, 1994

The sun was cut to a hot sliver,
bit back to a hook shape by a crazed stone;
a malcontented moon, pressing for more
space while thousands of thirsty eyes filled up,
gazing through shielded scopes and contraptions.

Pin-pricked papers showed tiny doll pictures;
images of round fire as it narrowed.
Shadows of leaves cast flat crescents of light
and puzzled by the strangeness, insects went mad.

Pity the owners of ignorant eyes,
burned with the heat of desperate excitement,
and pity the people who have not heard
the scientific rationality,
fear eased by fact, promising her return.

—Jon Snyder
Bristol, Connecticut

The Morning News, June 14

Today a story of students
burning a flag somewhere in Kansas.
On screen the protestors
flit like hummingbirds: small,
fast, fearless. The other side:
men with guns, stolid
as desks. Thunderclouds
swell as backdrop.

The segment ends, a close-up
of the flag, the red and white
an orange flame, the blue
lost in smoke. All day
I'm haunted: Why hunt hummingbirds
with pistols? Why make cloth
the line? Is it for glory?
Is it for food?

—Ken Waldman
Juneau, Alaska

Sympathetic Views

Walking through our small sea town
we debate which house has best view
stalking backwards to get our heads
inside our neighbors' vision
feeling we glimpse them naked
if we look in one window
and see the water
through their other window.
All views become relative
till arriving home we notice
a reflection of the sea
emblazoned on our window
like a map of the earth.

—Ray Greenblatt
Paoli, Pennsylvania

Reincarnation

Like a shining sheet of molten glass,
A wave,
Silently propelled by speed of wind and tide
Eagerly, expectantly, ascends
And then at crest
Gleefully explodes into a bubbly spray
Hurrying towards the shore
Dispelling self into the sand
To be molecularly rearranged
To become a wave once more.

—Rocky Main
Redding, California



a richness

morning wind
blows hard and salt-fresh
and clean
across the pier

the blue-green light
of the gulf
surges broad,
then tilts
on water-strings
against the sky

the bait can stands
like a little
exclamation mark
and the sun roves
like a mountain dog
among the clouds

in his camp chair,
strung to the earth
and to the water
and to the silver
world of sand shark
and sea-horse
and dolphin,
my grandfather sits
and says nothing

he smiles
that he has known
the richness
of this world—
and ignores
the trembling
of my heart

—Charles B. Tinkham
Hammond, Indiana

HOOSIER NOTES
(Music in Northwest Indiana - 1920 to 1950)

by Patricia Wilson



Music appeals to Americans on many different levels. Early settlers considered listening to it a waste of time unless a song specifically contributed to the work at hand. As a matter of fact, before WWI, most musicians in the United States were immigrants and foreigners. Some religious denominations viewed music with suspicion and imposed restrictions on its use in their worship services. Secular attitudes varied, too.

Those musicians with a classical background were often regarded by some Americans as intimidating. Opera, symphony music and recitals perplexed those who felt that such entertainment could be understood only by the more sophisticated. Radio, vaudeville, burlesque and the minstrel show usually attracted average citizens. Interestingly enough, many white performers preferred to mimic black entertainers' spontaneous musical expressions. These non-black musicians, in black face, felt that they could express their feelings more honestly through this open and less inhibited style of music. So, in America during the first half of the 20th century, the types of music that were available were as diverse as the economic and ethnic groups who listened to them.

Music brought relief during the troubled times of the Depression, giving people a momentary pause from the tensions during that economic downturn. For many years, educators in Indiana realized the importance of music in public schools. Singing or playing instruments provided an element of accomplishment in a child's life that nothing else could fill.

In Gary and Whiting, important events involving music were taking place. For instance, in 1927 the Board of Education of Gary published a book entitled *The Auditorium and Its Administration,* which contained a chapter on the wonderful work in music being done in the schools.

According to an article appearing in an April, 1928, edition of the *Chicago Tribune,* Gary welcomed home one of its musically-talented daughters—Miss Kathryn Witwer. Miss Witwer's operatic performance as Bizet's *Carmen,* which occurred the previous December at the Civic Opera House in Chicago, drew enthusiastic applause and acclaim. Her trip back to her hometown aboard the South Shore proved to be a special occasion. Mayor Lloyd E. Williams and a crowd of five hundred fans, accompanied by three high school bands, greeted her. The revenue raised from the next concert she gave in Gary provided funds to further her musical education.

Father John Lach, pastor at Immaculate Conception Church in Whiting, organized a band consisting of underprivileged Catholic youth. The boys and girls who played in this band came from a Slavic background and were from seven to twelve years old. This organization, by helping to broaden the children's interests and capabilities, was one of the most unique juvenile bands appearing before the public. Besides performing locally, these young musicians toured the eastern United States.

In 1935, the group disbanded and reorganized under the direction of Mr. Adam P. Lesinsky. This time the orchestra consisted only of boys, and there were no restrictions regarding religious or ethnic background. Males, aged twelve to twenty, made up this sixty-five-member group. Selection was based upon musicianship and the student's determination to improve himself. Members included twenty-one from the former band, thirty-five from Whiting High School, nine from Hobart and three from Cicero, Illinois. Each member took an oath of allegiance to the flag and pledged himself to the cause of temperance.

One year later, in 1936, Mr. Hirsch, from the National Broadcasting Company, booked these boys on a fifty-five-city tour of Europe. In forty-four days, the band visited countries such as France, Holland, Beligium, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Yugoslavia, Italy and Czechoslovakia. In addition, this ensemble toured the eastern United States, performing in Washington, D.C., and participating in a program at the Radio City Music Hall in New York City with the famed Rockettes. Locally, Father Lach's Boys Symphonic Orchestra accompanied the

renowned tenor Mr. John McCormack in Gary.

One of the oldest members of the original band, clarinetist Mr. James Judson, recalls the side trip the orchestra took to Rome, where the boys had an audience with the Pope. Even by 1949, Mr. Judson still had an interest in music, and played with the South Holland Adult Band.

From 1931 to 1957, Mr. Lesinsky was a music educator in Whiting. Under his direction, the high school bands and orchestras ranked among the best ensembles that entered state and national competitions. Using a unique individualized method of teaching to develop model instrumental music programs, this local teacher was lauded by music educators throughout the United States. In fact, Mr. Lesinsky was classed as one of the pioneers who guided the high-school-band-and-orchestra movement in America during the early stages of its growth.

Born in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, Mr. Lesinsky, a self-taught musician, played under John Philip Sousa. He is quoted as saying, "My work in Whiting wasn't a job—it was a way of life." He was affectionately known as "Teach." His accomplishments are numerous: among other things, he devised the private lesson system and invented the aluminum frog for string instruments. He created the world's smallest cello and bass, too. Also, he authored numerous articles related to music, including *Advantages I Have Found in the F Saxophone, School Music in War Time, Meeting Individual Needs in Music* and *The Future of the School Orchestra.*

The music of Mr. Lesinsky's "Unique Jug Band" in the 1940's was broadcast throughout Chicagoland. He tutored many musicians, some of whom eventually performed with the Boston Pops and the Cleveland Symphony. One of Mr. Lesinsky's students taught at the Juilliard School of Music. Other pupils played locally with the Gary Symphony. His enthusiasm and love for music were infectious. A jazz musical dynamo himself, Mr. Lesinsky believed that "Music is so omnipresent that the person who does not appreciate good music has an unbalanced education."

Gary-born James McCracken attended Horace Mann High School, where his interest in music was so strong that, instead of eating lunch, he would sing in the music room, imitating the voices from opera records. Encouraged by the school's music teacher, he sang in high school groups. After high school graduation, Mr. McCracken moved to New York City. There, his career hit a snag when temperamental arguments between himself and Rudolph Bing, the Metropolitan Opera's choral director, flared up. Mr. McCracken left for Europe. While there, he established his operatic career, gaining the title of America's finest tenor.

Returning to the United States, he sang at the White House for President Richard Nixon. In addition, he performed numerous times at Ravinia in Chicago, and also gave a concert at Munster High School in the 1960's. Mr. McCracken's favorite role was that of Othello. In 1984, at the age of sixty-two, he died of a heart attack.

Before the Depression, a major musical attraction in Whiting was Madura's Danceland. Located on Indianapolis Boulevard and Calumet Avenue near Roby, this family-owned business was part of the Boardwalk Amusement Park, which opened on April 18, 1927. Spectacular in appearance, Madura's ballroom featured a unique innovation—the "perfect spring cushion" floor.

In no time, Madura's became famous for drawing some of the most popular dance bands from the 1920—1930 era. Jimmy Dorsey, Henry Busse, Tiny Hill, Eddy Howard, Vaughn Monroe, Guy Lombardo, Frankie Masters, Bix Biederbeck (the world's greatest jazz trumpet player), "Sig" Meyers and his White City Jazz Orchestra, and Charlie Pierce with his famous Ten Illianians South Chicago Favorite Syncopators all thrilled Hoosiers and Chicagoans. As couples tripped the light fantastic or took a break and sat amidst the bowered and latticed seating arrangements surrounding the dance floor, many a romance was nurtured. On July 20, 1967, Madura's was destroyed by fire. Though the family hoped to rebuild the ballroom, costs were too prohibitive. So, an era of musical entertainment in the Calumet Region ended.

Kathryn Witwer and James McCracken from Gary, along with Father John Lach and Adam P. Lesinsky from Whiting, are notable personalities from Northwest Indiana. Their various musical contributions, so diverse and vital, are well remembered by today's area residents and this musical heritage will live forever.

Patricia Wilson lives in Hammond, Indiana.



Photos courtesy of the Whiting Public Library, Local History Room



Photo by Lee Bielawski

One And The Same

Dave believed in Marx and Lenin
Don believed in Farwell and Reagan,
Dave wanted to force others
to become
communists and socialists
Don wanted to force others
to become
cash-christian conservatives,
Dave was driving recklessly
irrespective of public safety
as was Don
from the opposite direction
the two cars twisted into one,
Dave and Don were buried
in the same grave
in the True Believer Cemetery.

—Rod Farmer
Farmington, Maine

Florentine Skyline

In the clear light of
a cold November day
an old church
becomes a basilica,
a warehouse
the monastery,
vacant prison
the royal residence
in this upstate town
in Pennsylvania.
On the horizon
trees group together
like cardinals' miters.

—Ray Greenblatt
Paoli, Pennsylvania

Because Of My Father's Illness

The unseen and unexpected
Catastrophes
Arrived like cold
March windstorms.
They came leaving me empty
And pale with tears.
I know!
I should be at church.
But for the moment,
I'm indulging in wine to keep
The memory of the cancer away.
I know!
I should be praying,
But I'm too drunk to be saying anything.

—Jesus A. Gutierrez
East Chicago, Indiana

THE MARBLE

by Daniel Lindsey

It was a sunny October day when Toby returned to the clouds. He squeezed his chubby buttocks into the tight curve of cracked plastic and grabbed two rusty chains. Closing his eyes and leaning back, he drank in the warm rays that washed over his face. He arched backward as far as he could and waited until the swing slowed to a stop. When he opened his eyes, huge puffs of cumulus lumbered across his field of vision in perfect formation. He quickly spotted a bison, a tiger and a mongoose, all familiar to him from the zoo. He squinted and picked out a bus, then a time machine, like the one he wrote about in his last book report.

Toby's survey was interrupted by a hot tingling sensation coming from his arms. He pulled himself up to ease the strain, keeping his gaze fixed above. He closed his eyes and began to swing. A gentle breeze caressed his cheeks and lifted him from his seat. He floated up, up into the clouds, joining them far above the ragged asphalt. He found the tiger and climbed onto its back, settling in for a long journey. The clouds moved fast and soon he had traveled far, far away, where, looking down, he saw that everything was green.

Pop! Pop! Pop! Toby's eyes flew open as he tumbled from the sky. He fell to the cement and flung his arms over his head. Another POP! in the middle distance followed by a PINNNGGGGGGG! so close and shrill it made his ears buzz. Toby pressed himself flatter to the ground and wished for the thousandth time he were thin like Tiara and Tameka.

After a minute Toby realized that the only sound was that of his own whimpering. He cautiously raised an arm and looked around. Three feet to his left a small dent marked the spot where the bullet had ricocheted off the grey metal pole. Looking back toward the parking lot, Toby saw that it was empty. He scrambled to his feet and ran home.

Toby lived with his mother and two sisters in apartment 611 of 2820 East Mitchell, one of six high-rises that made up the Clara B. White Homes.

Clara B. White—everyone called her Mother White—had been a champion of the local civil rights movement in its earliest days. Her nemesis was long-time Mayor John F. Casey, whose grand design for his third term was an urban renewal program on the city's waterfront. Step one of the mayor's program was the demolition of some condemned tenements stubbornly inhabited by transients of every hue.

Mother White was among the grass-roots leaders opposing the mayor's policy of gentrification. In her crowning moment she chained herself to a Caterpillar bulldozer sent to demolish one of the tenements. Cheered on by her supporters, Mother White stood her ground for thirty-six hours, twelve of them in the rain.

The mayor was savvy enough to avoid a police confrontation. Instead he met personally with Mother White, hoping to reason with her, or at least to wear her down. But she was as solid as the One True Rock in Whom her faith was unshakably placed. Two of the tenements were spared, renovated and preserved as mixed-income housing.

Soon thereafter Mother White was called home to her Maker when a city bus lost its brakes and careened out of control onto the sidewalk where she was carrying groceries. The city's first public housing complex, built two years later, carried her name. She would have been proud. The bright, clean apartments and spacious green playing fields met with universal acclaim. The development was quickly filled with thousands of eager applicants, black and white, mostly employed, proud to invoke the name of Clara B. White when declaring their place of residence.

Ten years later, when Toby's mom, Jocelyn, was born, things were already changing. Outside the city, developers had discovered a powerful new phenomenon, the subdivision, and like a magnet it pulled affluent whites from the city. As fledgling suburbanites left the old neighborhoods, these in turn became home to whites from the projects. At some point during Jocelyn's childhood she and her neighbors began to refer to their complex as "Nobody", as in "Nobody Be White."

Working-class blacks, too, began to leave the Homes to purchase a slice of the American Dream. As the resident population became blacker and poorer, repairs began to take weeks rather than days.

By the time her parents moved out, Jocelyn's apartment was dingy from lack of paint and the kitchen grease-coated from a failing exhaust fan. The ailing plumbing system sprang leaks which rotted wood fixtures and attracted roaches. During the long winter months Jocelyn operated her stove full-time, space-heating the apartment when she wasn't using it to cook.

Still, Jocelyn longed for the days when roaches and cold weather were her worst problems. She could buy a can of Raid and an extra blanket from the thrift store. She could not lock her children indoors.

Toby passed through the metal detector and by the unmanned security booth toward the elevator. Seeing that it was broken, he entered the dark stairway and trudged up to the sixth floor. When he pushed open the door, Jocelyn turned from her sizzling pork chops and gave a start.

"Toby! What happened?" she cried, wiping her hands on an apron and rushing over to him.

Toby followed her gaze down to his leg. From a gash just above the knee dried

streaks of blood reached down to the ankle. Toby had been too scared to feel the shard of glass pierce his skin when he hit the ground. Only now, alerted to the wound, did he begin to feel a dull, throbbing pain.

"They was shootin', so I jumped on the ground."

"On the ground where?" demanded Jocelyn with a scowl.

Toby hesitated. "On the swing."

"Boy, I done tole you not to go near that parkin' lot. You know ain't nothing good happenin' back there. You gonna get yourself killed one a these days. You wanna end up like Rasheed?" Even as she spoke these words, Jocelyn's hand jerked forward as if to snatch them from the air before they could reach Toby. As the tears welled up in his eyes Jocelyn swatted playfully at Toby's head. "Go on into the bathroom. Lemme turn off these chops 'fore they burn, and I'll come fix that little ole cut. Then we'll have us a real nice meal."

Jocelyn loved her girls, but Toby was special. Long before he could read he would pick up a book and stare transfixed at the magical symbols on the page as if on the verge of unlocking some great mystery. Once he could read there was no stopping him, and he always did well in school.

Jocelyn was sorry that Toby had so few friends, but glad, too, because it kept him safe inside with his books, and with her. Jocelyn knew that if she could just get him through his teenage years, his mind would be his ticket out of Nobody.

Jocelyn had almost made it out. She had been a good student, too, and in the fall of her senior year had been accepted to the state university on a partial scholarship. If she worked a part-time job and got some help from her daddy, who labored in a factory making cabinets, Jocelyn would be able to live on campus as a full-time student.

But on Christmas Eve Day of her senior year, her daddy lost his left thumb and index finger to a panel saw, and Jocelyn lost her dream. When the worker's comp checks ran out, it became clear that her father's days at the factory were over. The bottle became his solace, mama picked up the slack by working piecemeal cleaning jobs, and Jocelyn was called upon to look after the younger children. Her dream denied, she no longer resisted the more common pursuit of her peers—motherhood. Soon it was too late for Jocelyn to leave.

Too late for Jocelyn, but not for Toby, who carried the remnants of her dream. Jocelyn's driving passion was to see that Toby made a life for himself as grand as the settings in his books.

This was why Rasheed's death was different. There were too many young lives cut short for Jocelyn to dwell on each. Normally she would say a prayer for the victim's family, cook them a plate of chicken, and resume the hard business of mothering. If she talked about a shooting with her children, it was to give them an object lesson in the rules of self-preservation. But Rasheed was not just another young life. Rasheed was Toby's best friend.

During the school year Jocelyn exited 2820 at seven o'clock each weekday morning with a twin in each hand and her son in tow. The four would make a beeline for the corner, cross Coolidge at the light, then pass under the el tracks and continue five blocks south to Booker T. Washington Elementary. If the light was green they would make it across Coolidge without incident.

Often, though, they were forced to stand at the corner and suffer the taunts of the bangers.

"What up, Tubby? Mama won't let you hold her hand today?"

"Yo, homey, why don't you hang with us?"

"See ya after school, Tubby. I'll read yo' book, you be my crook!"

These words were half-scorn, half-enticement, and Jocelyn preferred by far the scorn. It was the enticement which sent a chill down her spine, conjuring up her worst fears. In the eyes of the bangers Toby was a shy, fat, mama's boy, prime fodder for their barbs, and for recruitment. If Toby provided an unlikely profile for a banger, that would make him all the more valuable to the corner clocker. And the clocker, puppeteer to the wisecracking truants, knew just how vulnerable was the soul of the lonely young boy.

Jocelyn did not respond to these gibes. Rather she drew Toby close and reminded him with a fierce whisper, "You don't need them, Toby. You goin' to school and you gonna be somebody!"

But one day, standing on the corner, Jocelyn found that she was unable to move her lips. Toby was surprised not to hear her voice, but then heard a new one: "Ease up, bros, be cool. Toby be one smart dude."

Rasheed could say this—could say almost anything he wanted to—because he was the star halfback of defending state champion Douglass High. Rasheed's accomplishments on the gridiron made him community property for all to claim and protect. Along with his undiscriminating kindness and amiability Rasheed's athletic prowess earned him the respect of his peers without the requirement of gang attachments.

Toby's gifts were also well known, if unevenly appreciated. Rasheed had heard about Toby and something had drawn him to the boy. They didn't speak that morning, but the next week Rasheed came by to visit, and from that point on an unexpected bond began to develop.

During football season Toby went to watch Rasheed practice as often as he could, and afterward they walked home together. If they had time, Rasheed came up and leafed through one of Toby's treasured volumes, and Toby recounted its contents with renewed energy. Sometimes they rode the el at night to see the city lights, and during the Christmas season they spent all day downtown looking at the decorations and buying presents.

The highlight of their year-long friendship was a twi-night doubleheader at the local ballpark. For days Toby recounted details of the trip to Jocelyn, most of them related to Polish sausages and funnel cakes rather than hits and errors. Rasheed and Toby didn't get home until after midnight, normally unthinkable, but Jocelyn had decided early on that any time spent with Rasheed was time well spent.

Rasheed was both protector and inspiration. When he walked with Toby across the trash-strewn lots of Nobody, the would-be taunters remained silent, and eventually their respect for Rasheed extended to Toby. More important to Jocelyn was the effortless manner in which Rasheed affirmed Toby's creative self and began to convince him that there were outer boundaries to the darkness of Nobody, boundaries which could one day be surmounted and left behind.

But with Rasheed gone—indeed claimed by that very darkness —Jocelyn feared that it had already begun to close in upon her son. Each day since the funeral Toby had come home from school and gone straight to his room. None of the familiar reports from class, none of the keen observations that entertained Jocelyn and swelled her heart

with pride. Toby just sat and stared out his window. Every now and then he would pick up a book and begin to read, but he would always stop after a few lines.

Then, on this bright, beautiful Sunday morning, they had gone to church. Jocelyn hauled the children onto two buses and an el to join her sister, Deacon Emily, at the Full Gospel Church of the Redeemer, a narrow East Side storefront nestled amongst a patchwork of equally nondescript buildings. From within these humble environs a small but sanctified number belted out songs of praise and testified in the Spirit.

Jocelyn was unusually preoccupied. Throughout the service she stole glances at Toby, looking for a spark of interest, a break in the dark cloud that was swallowing him up.

It seemed later that she must have been praying her thoughts and that her prayers were being answered when Toby quietly asked if he could play outside before coming in for dinner. Jocelyn was so happy to see this first ray of light that she forgot her standard warning against playing near the parking lot.

Now, as she took the pork chops off the stove and set them to drain on a paper towel, Jocelyn realized that she had no one to blame but herself. She prayed silently that the shooting wouldn't dim Toby's first glimmer of recovery.

But it did. After she cleaned and bandaged his wound, Toby went to his room and remained there for the rest of the day, refusing to eat.

When Jocelyn went to pick up Toby at school the next day, she sent him to the library and went in search of Toby's English teacher, Mr. Blankenship.

"I appreciate your takin' the time, Mr. Blankenship. I know you be Toby's favorite teacher, so I thought maybe you could help."

"I'm glad to do whatever I can, Ms. Davis. Toby is a fine student, and I always enjoy reading his stories. He has quite an imagination, and quite a gift for writing."

"I know," she smiled weakly. "But I'm worried. You see, his best friend, Rasheed Taylor, was killed last week. He was like a big brother, really, and they was very close. Since then Toby just don't seem the same."

"Yes, I heard. I'm very sorry. And angry, of course. As for Toby, yes, he has seemed distant this week, but I'm sure that's to be expected. He'll recover in time. Meanwhile I'll try to give him a little extra attention. In fact, we're starting to work on the Kwanzaa play this week. I was thinking that this year we might write a new script. Let me see if I can get Toby interested."

Jocelyn was grateful but continued to worry as the days passed and Toby remained distant. Toby often withdrew from others, even from Jocelyn, but if he did so it was to explore the magical terrain of Sherwood Forest, Narnia, or Wonderland. And whereas Jocelyn had always tried to moderate Toby's diet, now his lack of appetite only increased her fears.

"Toby," she asked a few days after meeting with Mr. Blankenship, "how your English class goin'?"

"It's okay."

"What you doin' these days?"

He had to think a moment before answering. "Oh, reading some poems."

"What about Kwanzaa? They started the play yet?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"What you mean you think so? You not part of that?"

"No."

This distressed her so much that she immediately called Emily.

"I don't know what else to do."

"You need to pray, sister."

"I don't think I can."

"I hear ya, Joc. Okay, you leave that to me. You tried fried chicken?"

"Yeah, but he just nibbles. That sound like Toby to you?"

"No, but you just keep on tryin', and I'll keep on prayin'. He can't resist both the lovin' arms of Jesus *and* your fried chicken for very long!"

Jocelyn smiled as she hung up the phone. She knew that her sister's advice was as much for her as for Toby. Emily knew she loved to cook, knew standing in front of the stove, arms covered with batter, the only worry she had room for was how long to leave in the wings.

"Toby, wouldn't you like some yo' mama's fried chicken and gravy? You know you ain't been eatin' right lately. You eat some chicken and you'll feel better, don't you think?"

Even in his numbed state Toby sensed the depth of Jocelyn's concern. For her sake he mad an effort. "Yeah, mama, that'd be real good. You want me to go to the store?"

Her face brightened. "Yeah, baby, here's some money. You go straight across to CJ's and get the chicken, a few potatoes and some flour. You go now, and I'll get the girls to help me cut the beans. I'm gonna fix us a real feast!"

Toby took the bills and dragged himself down the hall to the stairwell. Just before he pushed opened the door he heard the elevator going up. He went over and punched the down button.

After a few minutes the elevator hummed to a stop and the doors opened to reveal Mr. Crane, an older man who lived two floors up.

"Hello, Toby, where you headed?"

"To the store."

"That's nice, I bet your mama gonna cook you a nice meal, huh?"

Toby nodded and they rode down in silence. Toby listened to the slow, grinding progress of the descending cabin. Then, between the second and third floors, he heard a metallic twang and felt the elevator lurch, continue on for a few seconds, then jolt to a halt. Toby lost his balance and fell to the side, knocking into Mr. Crane.

" 'Scuse me, Mr. Crane."

"That's all right, Toby, it's not your fault. These damned elevators never work. What them fatcats down in management do all day, anyhow?"

Toby righted himself and helped steady Mr. Crane, whose glasses had fallen to the floor. As Toby reached down for them, he detected a faint pungent odor.

"Here you go, Mr. Crane."

"Thanks, Toby, can't see much without these. Lucky they didn't break. Damn, I wonder how long we'll have to wait this time."

Then Toby realized what he had smelled. Through the crack at the bottom of the elevator doors a small, white tendril sneaked through, spun for a moment on an invisible axis, and withdrew. Toby's eyes grew big as saucers.

"What's that smell, Toby?"

"I think somethin's burnin', Mr. Crane."

"Quick, boy, hit that red button over there."

As the alarm bell sounded small puffs of smoke billowed into the base of the cabin. Toby and Mr. Crane inched backward and held onto each other. They stared as the smoke poured in and filled the elevator. The air grew thin and Mr. Crane



began to cough. Toby looked at him, then lunged for the doors and made a desperate attempt to pull them open. Soon he, too, began to cough. The last thing he remembered was slumping dizzily to the floor.

For a long time Toby lay still in the darkness. When he finally opened his eyes, he was alone, stretched out flat on his back on a blanket of snowy drifts. It was cool, and the air was fresh. He looked about him in wonder at this strange but welcoming place. He tried to sit up but could not.

"Toby."

Toby turned his head and gasped at the sight of Rasheed. He wore his football uniform, all but his helmet. He gazed at Toby and smiled a warm, knowing smile.

Toby beamed in return. He tried again to sit up, but his body felt like lead. It took all his effort just to keep his head turned toward Rasheed.

Nor could he speak, but Rasheed was able to read his eyes.

"No, Toby, I know what you thinkin', but you can't join me. You can see me, but I be far, far away. Your place be with your mama and sisters. You got a lot to do. You gonna do great things. Great things." He paused. "Here, I'm gonna give you somethin'. You just look at this when you get tired. You gonna be all right."

Rasheed bent down and reached over. He took Toby's hand, lifted it, and swallowed it in his own, so large and comforting. He gave a firm squeeze, filling Toby with a sudden rush of energy. Yes, thought Toby, now I can move. He closed his eyes, concentrated, and slowly began to sit up.

"Toby, you're back!"

Toby opened his eyes. Everything was white. Hospital white. Sheets, tiles, fluorescent tubes. Then he saw Jocelyn sitting in a chair next to his bed.

"Oh, thank the Good Lord, you're back! You lay real still, mama's right here. Doctor say you gonna be fine, Toby, just fine. Lemme call the nurse."

As Jocelyn walked over to push the button, Toby settled back down into the pillows. He was so tired. So tired. What had Rasheed said? Look at this when you get tired. Look at what?

Then Toby felt the small, cold lump. He opened his fist. Lying on his palm was a solid glass orb about an inch in diameter, reflecting a deep, bright blue. Within the azure crystal thin swirls of creamy white drew the eye along tiny arcs. Toby brought the marble close and stared intently. For the first of many times he held it up above him and pictured himself leaping from one cirrus swirl to another until at last he flung himself down on one just before it shot off into the distance. As Toby thrust the marble away from his face with a small jerking motion, Jocelyn turned back to him.

"Toby, where you get that?"

" I dunno, mama," he answered weakly, "it was in my hand."

"Must be a gift from someone. Look at all the flowers and books spread out here on the table."

"Yeah, mama, a gift."

Six weeks later Toby sat in the front row between Jocelyn and Mr. Blankenship and watched the opening performance of his Kwanzaa play. At the close a full house erupted in a standing ovation. As the cast took its curtain call, Mr. Blankenship stepped forward, turned around to face the crowd, and gestured toward Toby. The cheers grew louder. As Toby smiled shyly at the crowd, he eased his hand into his pocket and gently rolled the marble between thumb and index finger, back and forth, back and forth.

Daniel Lindsey lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Discovery

For Janet

It was as if I, an infant, floated
In a palmleaf crib without nails,
On water with no name or goodbye,
And presumed the moon my mother,
And the mute bulrushes, nodding,
Her implicit lullaby,

And you, an Egyptian princess
Jinglejangling to the boat
Bumping into the strand,
Who, between papyrus and lily,
Scooped me from the child bed,
Handed me the promised land.

—Edward Locke
Canton, Massachusetts

Tissue Paper Flower

The fragrance of your
    Tissue paper flower
Still heavy on my pillow
You are gone now—should I
    Cry or laugh?
The sound of your voice as
You told me it was through
Still running through
    My mind I wish
        You were dead
            You
            Your memories
            Your tenderness
            Your forcefulness
Gone with the tissue
    Paper flower—so like myself—
Flying now
    Out of the window
        Out of my soul
            Out of my life

—Jennifer Zempel
Fox Point, Wisconsin



Photo by Lee Bielawski

Early Spring In The Country

Shaggy, old sunflowers
bow their grey heads under the soggy, crusted snow.

Violets pepper the woods with tiny explosions.
Water runs, icy from under the snow, sorting sand
from mud in grainy rivulets. The ground is cold
everywhere and damp and raw, shrugging off frost.

Although the sun can warm, it does not and
a chilly wind causes bare branches to click together as
it
  pirouettes among the
    trees.

—Norman J. Olson
St. Paul, Minnesota



Art Collectors

(After Sir William Hamilton, 1730 - 1803)

Reading about Lord Hamilton's loss,
  I think of my Tang figurine
    and mourn with him:
his Ming vases, Greek sculpture,
  prized paintings sunk
    beneath the sea.

It had taken him years to admit
  he had lost his wife
when she traded luke-warm
owner for Nelson, lover,
    though half-blind.

Yet soon after Hamilton's art works
  were gone, his sorrow
drew him into the drowning night
of death: he could not bear a light
    no longer on his treasures.

My gaze strokes the Tang lady I guard
  behind glass: she's alive
    inside my heart,
aware how much her flowing clay
  moves me, and how its grace
    stirs me into dance.

—Rose Rosberg
New York, New York

Of Times Past

A hand-made scarf
of white-edged lace
graced the parlor table.
Beneath that scarf,
mother placed money
for the baker, the milkman,
or whoever came into
the unlocked house.

Mother trusted everyone.
While her family members
did not always warrant
trust, she managed
to find those who
kept her ideals intact.

—Deloris Selinsky
Shavertown, Pennsylvania

American Dream

Dad, you were a dignified whore,
cooking ethnic culture,
selling Americanized Chinese food
for $5.99 a dish.
All for enough money
to pay for English lessons,
taught by a black and white TV.

Dad, you were a willing martyr,
paying for brothers and sisters,
new school books and clothes
earned by your minimum-waged spine.
Back in the kitchen
where it was always summer hot,
you traded the sweet smell
of ether and a doctor's gown
for the pungent, lingering odor
of egg rolls and lo mein,
and Med school became a TV dream.

Dad, you were a silent specter,
bravely walking the streets
deaf to their curses.
Your skin did not break to the bites,
the word Chinaman dripping
from those tongues.
Their phlegm disgust
merely melted into the concrete.

Dad, you were a Buddhist monk,
assimilating his
infinite patience with
Christian suffering.
You still eat with chopsticks,
your calloused hands afraid
of a butter knife
that looks too much
like a surgeon's scalpel.

—Felix Jung
Bloomington, Indiana

All The Prophets Are Gone

Leaving a residue of hope
While the adams & eves
Who got fat on fruit
Run on the playground.

The kids sneak back into the classroom.
Light switch does not work,
And they erase words

Left on the blackboard.
Laughing as they pound
Erasers, the kids cloud
The room with lost words.

Outside again, kids try
To coerce their swings
To go higher, and others

Look up but cannot see
The sky nor the sun
And continue to climb
Through the monkey bars.

—Mick Kennedy
Terre Haute, Indiana



Shakespeare Never Titled Any of His Sonnets, So Why Should I...

Who will read my modest sonnet? For
It doesn't speak of death or courtly love;
Shakespeare I fear would find this blasphemous,
But judged since he's dead he'd never know.
Then it came to me one fateful morn,
To find me wading in Picasso's oils.
I swam past crooked eyes and backward nose,
And painted cobalt blue upon my toes.
Next thing I knew, I found myself sitting
Upon a pin and knitting Elvis sweat-
Ers for the Pope and all his kin; and then
I saw the most amazing thing to come
Before my eyes. 'Twas Shakespeare's ghost
Upon some toast and flashing me a smile.

—Tania Hurter
Arlington, Virginia

Fire Bush

As autumn claims its due reward
in frosted dawns and chill-clad eves,
the earth assumes a changing look
of rainbowed hues in glad array.
In one last fling this greening shrub
is garmented in brilliant red,
while blood is spattering from its heart
to paint a crimsoned earth.

—Anna Louise Staub
Rochester, New York

Mozart

What have Mozart's
teedledums and tinkling
trios got to do with our
beloved blood baths,
crematoria, poison
gases and pesticides?

No moan from slaves
laboring stooped
in Salzburg's salt mines
soured one grace note
tickling the skins
of princes and their ladies
gathered in rococo rooms
to have their hearts massaged
by harpsichord hammers.

The golden age in Vienna
was good to the salon crowd
but not for poor talented
tired Amadeus who quietly
coughed himself to death
in a damp garret.

For him we have our modern
masters compose
atonal tunes
that strangle sweet strings.

—Arthur G. Gottlieb
Lake Oswego, Oregon

Illustrations by Ken Withrow



Illustration by Ken Withrow

BROKEN ARROW BOY

by Shirley Jo Moritz

Suddenly, I either slipped or tripped, and I fell forward. When I hit the ground, the very dirty arrow I was carrying somehow entered my left eye and lodged in my brain." This almost tragic accident occurred on June 12, 1987, on an archery range in Oklahoma, the fifth day of Cub Scout Summer Day Camp, to a very remarkable and courageous young man, Adam Moore of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

Adam has turned his traumatic, life-threatening accident into a positive energy that has helped him survive and has made him into a stronger, more perceptive person. He is utterly determined to overcome the handicaps his accident has caused. Moreover, he wants to assure others that there is help for them, too!

Even today, Adam's marvelous sense of humor is intact. He said of his initial hospital stay, "I have tiny veins. And I hated needles more than anything because they hurt me. When the nurses came into my room, just to check my IV's, I called them the Vampire Squad."

The first eight years of his life were fairly simple. Adam rode a bike and played baseball with his friends, joined Indian Guides, then became a Cub Scout. But early on, his teacher recognized his talent for writing. As soon as he learned the alphabet and held a pencil, he began creating short stories. Little did Adam and his teacher suspect how important his special gift would soon become.

In Adam's first publication, *Broken Arrow Boy,* that accident, the rush to a near-by hospital, then the helicopter ride to a larger local hospital, the long surgery, the longer coma, the year of hospital recuperation and his success in keeping up with his third-grade school lessons are all vividly detailed and pencil-illustrated by young Adam.

Originally, the book was an assignment that Adam completed for a fourth-grade project. It proved to be his best writing yet. When the teacher entered the book in a contest, sponsored by a school district in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, it won first place. She then entered the book in the 1989 Landmark Editions, Inc. Student Author and Illustrator Contest, and the editors of their Gold Award line, extremely impressed by Adam's story, gave it a winner's award and decided to publish it.

In the final text, Landmark also included

"photographs taken by other people and comments made by doctors, nurses, teachers and family members." They felt that this information added to and enhanced Adam's documentary of extraordinary courage.

But Adam takes full credit for the picture on the cover of his book. "It was my Halloween costume. Dad shared my weird sense of humor, but Mom didn't think the idea was funny at all," he said. On the cover of the book, he is pictured wearing a fake arrow on his head. "Sure, people have mixed feelings about the photo, but it sums up my whole story. It gives people a real general idea of what the title and book are about."

In the three years of promoting awareness of the many kinds of danger and damage which can threaten the brain and promoting his book to the public, his mom, Rebecca, and he have seen a great deal of the country—even by plane, if the engagement is out of state, as it often is. For now, his agent is Mom. Although his speaking fee is set, occasionally there are exceptions. For example, he will speak at a reduced rate to poorly-funded schools. Hopefully, the book is the vehicle that will pay for Adam's college. He has visions of teaching, public speaking and "doing something with computers" in the future.

Thinking in terms of college, he has joined a fifth-grade computer club. And relinquishing his desire to play contact sports, especially basketball and football, he has become a safety patrol officer. He has also taken up stamp collecting and the study of chemistry.

But right now, his health is unstable. The shunt in his head had to be replaced recently, and his double-vision problem is still a puzzle to the doctors. Even the bouts with headaches and sick stomach have returned. At this time, he only takes baclofen medication for his legs. On the plus side, he regularly swims and works out with weights.

Adam credits his generally positive attitude to his sessions with his psychiatrist. "She has talked me through depression, lack of control over my emotions and self-pity," Adam says. He adds, "God helped me through almost all of this."

During the winter, keeping his grades up was the first priority of his efforts. Now, despite his pain and his many worries, Adam can hardly wait for summertime. He plans to write a second book—the sequel. A lot of things have happened in the last six years. He says, "I just have an idea."

Commenting on his traumatic experience, he offers this advice to head-injured people, "No matter how tough it is, no matter what you go through, if you have enough strength, you'll get through everything." And young Adam suggests to relatives and friends, "Just have patience. Ultimate patience. Just be very supportive, very patient."

A visit with Adam, even by phone, is uplifting and inspirational. At his young age, he has endured so much, overcoming tremendous odds. He accepts each day as a challenge to live to the fullest. We could all enrich our own lives by following Adam's example.

Shirley Jo Moritz lives in Merrillville, Indiana.



Photo of Adam Moore at 16 years old courtesy of author



Illustration by Jessi Ashli Lynn

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO HURT SOMEONE. . .

by Megan Barke

Children make excellent weapons in my experience. It is the natural compulsion of two furious people to take revenge in the best possible fashion, of course, but this ferocious anger is machinery for them to see beyond what might be their better judgement. Parents, particularly divorced ones, find it within themselves to manipulate their children into weapons against each other. Because, hey, if you really want to hurt someone, go for the heart.

By now, I'm starting to get a little angry. I need someone to drive me to practice tomorrow; my mother says it is my father's day to drive, and he is building up to his classic excuse of not having equal custody of us as a result of the divorce agreement, therefore, absolving him from responsibility. My mother is standing there with her ear practically up to the phone to hear what he's saying. She is refusing to drive me any more than her share because we are "with my father" at this particular time period. You see, "with my father" means that we aren't really her kids at this time because we are my father's responsibility. Me? Well, I just need someone to take me to practice. He's starting to rant now about how unfair it is that he should have to spend his one allotted night a week driving me to practice. He says the same lines I've been hearing for seven years; I try to drown them out, but they are blared so loudly into my ear that I couldn't possibly avoid them. My mother is, of course, loving this volume because she can hear every word he says. Her face is starting to turn red, her lips are getting tight, and she is so close to my face that I can see the wrinkles on her forehead stretching out into furiously taut lines. Me? I'm caught in a trash compactor with the walls closing in.

"Megan, don't let your father weasel out of this–tell him to take responsibility for you on his night!" My mother.

"Tell her to fuck off! Until she makes the time equal, I'm not gonna waste my time doing something for her!" My father.

"Why don't I just let you talk to Mom, Dad." That's me.

I'm making one last futile effort to avoid the almost inevitable "results" of this conflict. Results usually include my trying to defend my father during the long aftermath of insults that are spurred by their arguments. This is the immediate consequence. I've got the same thing to look forward to when I see my father. He'll save up all the anger and resentment, then drain it all over me the next time I see him.

"I'm not talking to your father, Megan. Tell him to deal with this on his own and not get me involved. It's his night!" She says this with her face inches from mine, and her ear is still up to the phone. She's waiting to hear what he'll say to that.

"Tell her to quit yelling at you," he yells, "and I'm not talking to her because it is her responsibility to get you to all these stupid activities she sets up!"

It goes on like this for awhile longer. The dialogue is generally the same. They say the same things over and over again in louder pitches and volumes like a song, but the words lack any creativity. It'll go on and on like this until finally my will gives out and they crush me. I'll just stop intercepting, and wilt or cry literally. Most of the time this ends it because I'm the bridge they need to get their point across. But on a couple of very auspicious occasions, the parent with whom I was staying at the time grabbed the phone away and continued the argument with me cast aside. The "results" are always the same, though, and they are usually the worst part because they take so long. I think that is what they really like, the "results." I know my parents do because they dredge up everything from when they first met and replay it for me, emphasizing the parts where they were caused pain and omitting the parts where they caused it. It's some kind of release for them, and I'm not sure that they believe they both do it. My parents probably prefer to think as they do because then they don't have to consider the effects of their speeches on me. This is devastating, by the way. Imagine two chemicals that are both incredibly lethal. Then consider mixing these chemicals together inside one person. This person would have a lot to carry around, you know?

I only left out one part. At the climax of these interactions, I have this moment. It's really hard to describe, and I'm not sure if it happens to other people or what. It is a moment where they are both yelling at me, but also at each other, and I will start to panic and tremble. I panic because for some abstract, subconscious reason I think to myself, *Oh, my God, they're gonna make me choose!* I dismiss it almost right away because, after all, they would never do that to me.

But wouldn't that just be the ultimate revenge?

Megan Barke, Age 16,
lives in Bloomington, Minnesota.



FISH CAN'T LIVE FOREVER



by Brooke Russell

Did you ever notice that pets just don't stick around for very long? Take fish, for example. Some of them don't even last for two or three weeks! Why don't they last for very long?

Maybe fish die off so quickly because they can't adapt to the new environment. When you walk into a pet shop, this is probably running through your mind: "Okay, let's find the healthiest looking fish." You pick it out and take it home. You make sure to follow all instructions on how to go about putting the fish into the new tank/bowl. In the next few weeks, the fish is eating and well.

One day returning home from school, you see it, there in the bowl on the table, floating on the top. Maybe it wasn't as healthy or as strong as it appeared in the pet shop. Or something tragic could have happened like another fish attacked and killed it, leaving the dead fish's remains floating around the bowl.

However, should your fish live to the ripe ol' age of four weeks, the luster of a new fishy in the family is bound to wear off. The excuses to ignore the fish soon mount up.

"I didn't forget to feed them. I thought that it was your turn. . . he was getting too fat anyways!"

"Everyone makes mistakes."

"It must have slipped my mind."

"He *was* too fat."

"I changed the water yesterday. Oh, my. Oh, my gosh! The water, it—it must be contaminated."

"Ammonia, what's ammonia?"

"You have to admit, he *was really* too fat!"

"What's that green stuff flowing out of the bowl? Algae, is it? It chokes them?"

"Somebody needs to take care of it."

Then there is always the parents' excuses. Mom's excuse being, "With six kids, who needs pets anyways?" Dad's conservative comment being, "Nobody watches them anymore. It's not like you need them."

IF YOU ARE A FISH FAN,
DO NOT CONTINUE READING!!!

People are always saying what they think or how they feel about their pets. Let me tell you how it really is. Many people grow attached to their pets because they are around for a while or the pet begins to feel like family. Sure, when you're welcoming a new pet to the family, it's not like you're going to reach into the water, pinch the fish's cheeks and say, "Gucci, gucci, goo! Welcome home."

And many owners of pets say that they are so playful. "They keep me entertained." There's not too much you can do with a fish. What are you going to do? Take it out of the water and wiggle it by its tail fin? Or better yet, pull out a deck of cards and play *Go Fish.*

Many owners think of pets as comforting and as protectors. Comforting. You can't snuggle up to a fish. What are you going to do? Wrap your arms around the glass and hug? I think not. Imagine a fish as a protector. It's not like they're going to jump out of the bowl and attack any unknown stranger. I can see it now: "A burglar? They won't even think of coming near here. I got the *FISH.*"

Then some owners say that pets are interesting to watch. Bologna! Dogs are more interesting to watch than fish, and dogs are stupid. What could possibly be so much fun about watching something swim? "Look, Ma, he did a flip!" For joy, that's how I would like to spend my spare time. And this business about unique! What's so unique about fish? Oh, this one has a blue spot and this one has a purple stripe. Some say that they are beautiful to watch, especially the colors on the fish in the light. (Yeah, maybe if you're extremely bored.)

I'm not complaining, but pets are hard work. If you are busy, you're not going to be able to give them all the love and attention they need. Wait a minute, what am I talking about? This is garbage. It's not as though the animals are going to respond to people. They are not human. And when you are talking to fish, you're talking to glass, for gosh sakes!

One last thing. I hate the expression: "Pets begin to look like their owners." Yeah, *maybe,* over some time. But it's not like you walk into a pet shop and say: "That fish looks like me! Let's get that one! It's starting to show some resemblance already."

Just face the facts head on. We all are going to die sometime or another, including pets. Fish are definitely no exception. No matter if they look like you or not.

Brooke Russell, Grade 8,
attends Mason Middle School
in Mason, Ohio.

Illustrations by Rhede Rhodes





Life

Life is like a ten-speed bicycle
Most of us have gears we never use

—Angela Escobedo, Grade 6
C. Pierce Middle School
Merrillville, Indiana









Free Birds

If a bird's life were my life,
I would help him fly,
I would tell him go, go real high.

I would let him go free,
Freer than slaves.

Birds are so sweet,
Their wings are so long. . .

I think I am air.

—Antonia Strickland, Age 11
Morris FX Jeff Elementary
New Orleans, Louisiana

Grandma's Bird

As the sun rises
Over the blue-pink sky
The cardinal shows off her red throat.
Her bony feet damp with the morning dew,
She knows she's being watched
By the small, loving grandma,
Who is eating her breakfast.
They are eating at the same time—
Pancakes and seeds.
When the cardinal flies off,
My grandma looks sad,
But she must know
That the cardinal will be back
For their lunch—
Together.

—Anna Mollner, Grade 9
Cretin-Derham Hall
St. Paul, Minnesota



Birds by Sia Samba, Grade 4
Cat by Sophie Kim, Grade 6
University School, Bloomington, Indiana

The Cannon

The thunder of the cannon
Is witnessed by the converging infantry
One blink before the devastation
Wreaks havoc in their gray ranks.
The scents of iron and smoke permeate
The air as the onslaught continues.
A thunder of hooves is heard on the west flank.
A lone rider is observed
Through the enemy's spectacles
Gliding across the field of destruction
In a dusty blue regimental.
The horseman is shouting wildly
Grasping a single scrap of paper
On which is written
The answer to hopes and dreams.
He arrives at the center of the sea of blue
Saluting with a grin
And handing the parchment to his commander
As a schoolboy hands in a test
Which he knows he studied for.
The general peruses the etchings
With a wild look in his eyes,
Then calls for a cease fire.
The war is over,
The gray is blue again.
The news travels like wildfire down the line
But does not reach the end
Before the order of an artillery captain
Is given.
The cannon fires at the enemy,
Now friend,
And claims its last casualties.

—Peter Ghrist, Grade 11
Morton High School
Hammond, Indiana



"Child of Chaos" by Sherry Herbst, Duluth, Minnesota

Dunking

He broke the backboard,
Shattering glass everywhere,
Glass skipping on the court.

—James Donelson, Grade 6
C. Pierce Middle School
Merrillville, Indiana

The Pitcher

The game is gone now,
Along with the arm,
Along with the career and money and fame,
The ball park is still,
As he sits quietly,
He cries,
The whiskey understands,
He could've made it,
Could've made it to the BIGS, they said,
Alone,
No team,
No friends,
No family,
Save for Jack Daniels and a cold September night,
The night is dark,
Along with his eyes and soul,
Only one more time he pleads,
Alone,
The bottle goes up,
The whiskey goes down,
Alone.

—Nickolas Butler, Grade 9
Memorial High School
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

SAFETY FIRST

by Nikki Lorentz

Safety first!" yelled my mom as I rolled out the door on my rollerblades. I love rollerblading, but my mom is always trying to get me to wear all those safety things such as wrist guards, knee pads and even a helmet. I especially hate wearing the helmet because I look so dumb, and I know that I am not going to get hurt. But on this one hot day in June, I learned my lesson.

It was my first day of summer vacation. I was skating up the big hill on Barland Street past Boyd School. The wind blew in my face as my ears picked up the sound of elementary kids playing at the school's playground across the street. Then the bell rang and all the students lined up. As I watched the kids go into the building, I noticed this girl rollerblading down the hill very fast; too fast according to me. But I thought she had her skates under control. I was wrong!

As I was nearing the top of the hill, I recognized the sound of rollerblades sliding across cement. I quickly looked back and saw her lying at the bottom of the hill, and she wasn't moving. So I yelled, "Are you okay?" I waited for a response, but there was none.

At that moment, many thoughts were racing through my mind, from that she just didn't hear me to that she was dead. I hurried down to her as fast as I could, being careful that I didn't fall, too. On my way, I saw her slowly sitting up. When I reached her, I again asked her if she was okay.

She said, taking a deep breath, "I'm okay. I just knocked the wind out of me. For a second, it was hard to breathe. But I think I'm okay now. I just got a bunch of cuts and bruises."

As I helped her up, I asked, "Where do you live?"

"Oh, just a couple blocks from the top of the hill."

"Are you sure you're okay?" I asked.

"Of course, I'm okay. Like I said, I just got a bunch of cuts and bruises. I think I'll survive," she said giggling.

"Okay then," I said. "By the way, what's your name?"

"Beth," she yelled as she slowly rollerbladed up the hill.

I watched her go, then I headed home. The whole way, I was in a daze. I couldn't stop thinking about what had happened to Beth. What if it had happened to me, but worse?

At home, I told my mom the whole story.

She said, "See, that's why you have to use all those safety things. The knee pads, the wrist guards, and, most importantly, the helmet. Just because that girl didn't get hurt badly this time, the next time she could crack her head open or something."

"Beth was very lucky. Yes, Mom, it could have been a lot worse."

That night when I was lying in bed, I started thinking about the experience again. I thought about how it could have been avoided, and what might have happened if it had been a lot worse. I fell asleep still thinking.

During the middle of the night, I shot straight up in bed and found that I was dripping with sweat. My clothes were soaked. I just sat there for a couple of minutes, taking deep breaths until I calmed down. All of a sudden, I remembered what had happened in my dream. Usually, I never remember my dreams.

In my dream, I was standing at the top of the hill getting ready to rollerblade down. I took a deep breath, and then started. The wind felt good blowing in my face. Then, I looked down and saw this huge stick lying in the middle of the sidewalk. I tried to swerve around it. But it was too late. I hit the stick. My feet went out from under me, and I went flying. I landed out in the middle of the street with a loud crash. The last thing I remembered before I woke up was a shooting pain rushing through my head. Blood was running down the side of my face.

That nightmare not only reminded me of what terrible things could happen while rollerblading, but it also made me realize that my mom was right. The dream scared me so much that now, every time I put on my rollerblades, I also put on my knee pads, wrist guards and, especially, my helmet.

I say to myself, "Safety first."

Nikki Lorentz, Age 15,
lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Editor's note: *According to Brain Injury Association, Inc., each year about 373,000 Americans are hospitalized because of traumatic brain injury. Of that figure, 10% of the injuries are caused by sports / recreational accidents. But even today, not enough motorcyclists, bikers, skaters and rollerbladers are aware of the importance and effectiveness of wearing a helmet. Support groups around the country are attempting to educate the public against becoming a statistic. Won't you help Nikki Lorentz spread the word about helmets?*

And You Pass

Your obscure serenity
Engulfs me in the red still
With the urge of primal moonlight
Passion and lust.

And you pass.

Now the shrill howls and
Shrieks of the seething madman
Buried deep within your fantasy
Of Elvis impersonator bullshit
Pierce me true.

And you pass.

Fist of emotion
Thrill of pain.
And you pass,
Again and again.

—Steve Edgington, Age 17
Wheeling High School
Wheeling, Illinois

Reflections

A double vision of myself reflects
Off glass that captivates my looks alone;
The essence of my soul it can't detect;
My true identity is kept unknown.
As to a lock deprived of needed key,
I wait to be acknowledged by the world.
My thoughts imprisoned deep inside of me,
And suddenly, my thoughts become unfurled.
They see me now for who I am, at last,
Much like a bird whose flight is still unsure,
Whose goal is to soar high and be steadfast,
I want to test my wings and go explore.
Though vision fools the eye and what it sees,
Oh, look beyond and you will set me free.

—Barbara Corson, Grade 10
Beverly High School
Beverly, Massachusetts

Illustration by Sherry Herbst, Duluth, Minnesota



Oh Baby; The Crowd Had A Bawl

Am I Me?

sometimes i think that i'm not who i am.
it seems that lately i've been the snake charmed
to give out my precious kisses
to the charmer.
i've forgotten my name on the wall playing tic-tac-toe
and spilled it while opening
the pickle jar.
it's a delicate process, outliving youth.
it seems i'm not who i was
when i was young.
have i changed? or has everyone else?
the morning sun rises on all other roosters,
but has seemed to pass me by.
is this fair?
is it the price of getting wiser?
i've been down the hall
and decided to head back to where
i've come from.

—Matthew Siegel, Age 18
Wheeling High School
Wheeling, Illinois



The Wedding

Picturebook memories swept away
by the single tear that floods your eye
Sliding down your cheek
it caresses your soft skin
Offering comfort
when none is sought
Spilling onto your pale green dress
it stains your being
With fragments of lost time
and forgotten dreams.

—Valerie Ptak, Grade 12
Morton High School
Hammond, Indiana

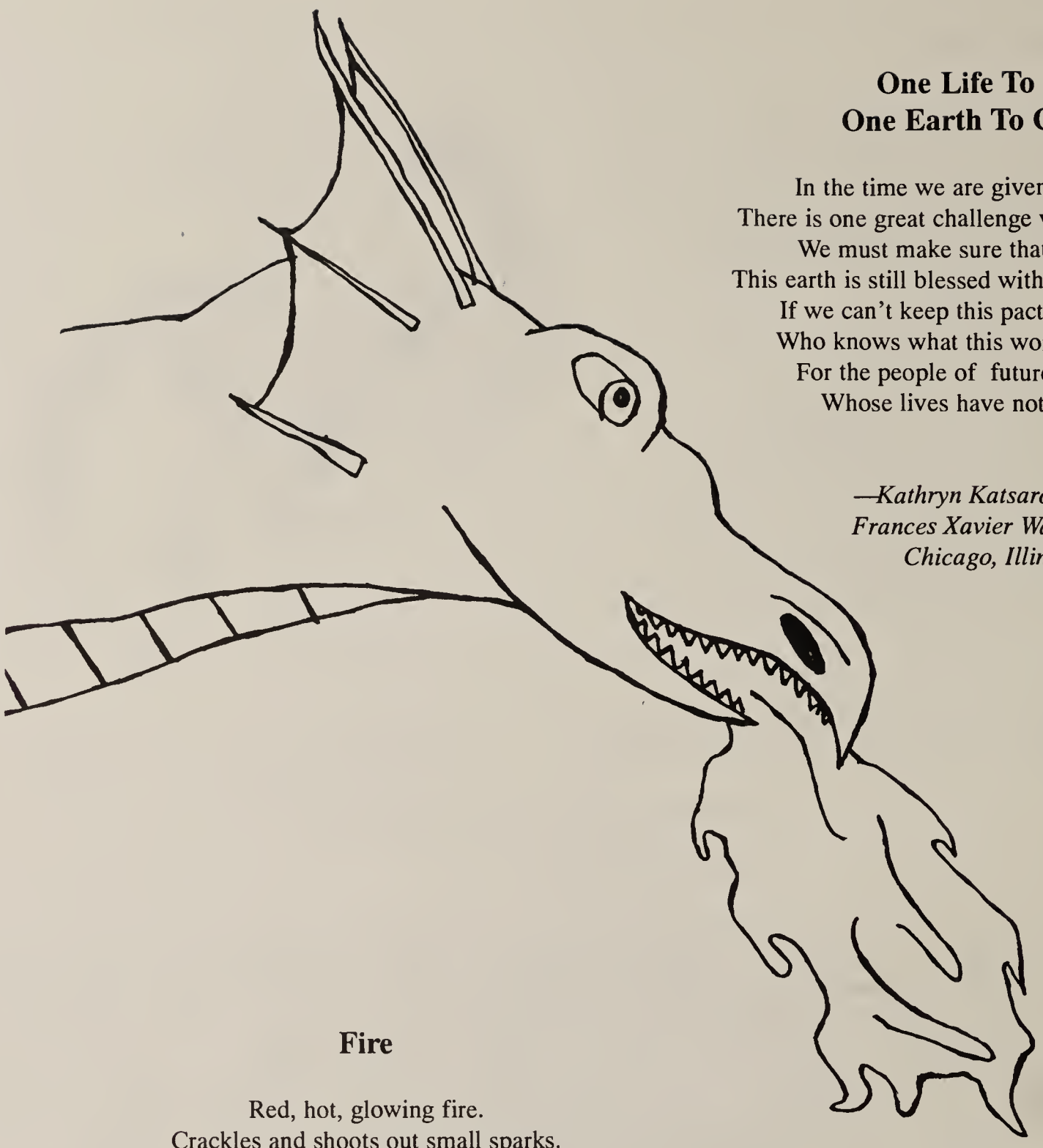


"Slices of Life" by Sherry Herbst, Duluth, Minnesota

A Violin's Sunset

I strike a wrong note
To make my presence known.
Then I make last minute checks
And begin my descent.
The lavender hills of my etude
Rush by me,
And my arpeggio in G
Strikes chords of teal trees
And harmonies of yellow clouds.
The impatient night throws a fit
Above me, but I laugh.
I will take my time,
3/4 to be exact.
At last, the final intervals
Are played, I ritard
And hungrily await
Getting home to practice
Tomorrow's sunrise.

—Julia Reed, Age 12
Nashville, Tennessee



Dragons by Joshua Diehl, Grade 5
Salk Elementary, Merrillville, Indiana

One Life To Live
One Earth To Cherish

In the time we are given on this earth
There is one great challenge we must overcome.
We must make sure that in the future
This earth is still blessed with that beautiful hum.
If we can't keep this pact with the earth,
Who knows what this world will become
For the people of future generations,
Whose lives have not yet begun.

—Kathryn Katsaros, Grade 4
Frances Xavier Warde School
Chicago, Illinois

Fire

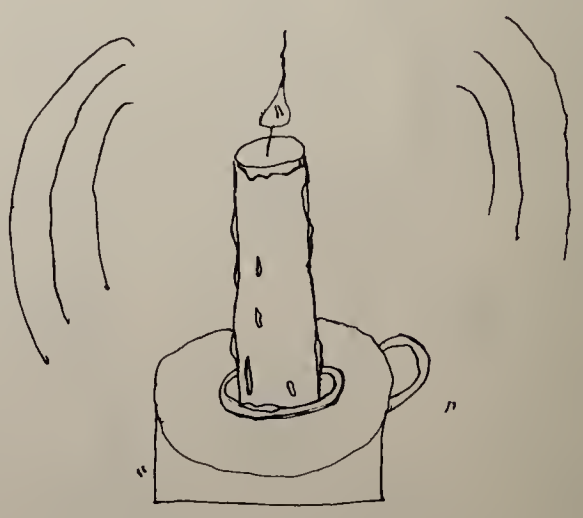
Red, hot, glowing fire.
Crackles and shoots out small sparks.
Warm, like summer days.



The Flame

Flickering and wobbling,
Swaying with the slightest breeze.
Flame on the candle.

—Marisa Valdez, Grade 6
C. Pierce Middle School
Merrillville, Indiana



Candle by Jessica Sherman, Grade 4
Eggers School, Hammond, Indiana



THE TIME OF THE DRAGONS



by Stuart LaBrooy

The dark spaceship slowly emerged from the Black Portal and approached the looming mists of the Planet of Dron. It landed on the spaceship port and the hatch opened to allow a small White Dragon, guarded by two evil-looking Black Dragons, out. The guards took him immediately to the Black Dragon Lord who was seated on his throne, fingering his black scepter. He placed it down when he noticed the nervous dragon, and motioned for the guards to depart.

"I hope you have enjoyed the accommodation I provided you," he said slowly, getting up from his throne. "It is not every day I use the Black Destroyer spaceship for just one prisoner. But you," he said, pointing to the dragon with one claw, "are special. I hear you have the power of seeing things that most dragons can't."

The White Dragon started shaking and in a trembling voice murmured a meek, "Yes, sir."

"Good," the Lord replied, continuing his oily politeness. "Well, I wish to use this to my advantage. Where is the last Item of Power I need to rule the entire Universe instead of just a measly planet?"

"S-sir, I can't do that, it is against. . ."

"SILENCE!" roared the monster. His scepter flashed. "You will do as I bid or else I destroy you!"

"Y-yes, sir." The White Dragon, still shivering, cast the spell and a flame of white rose up out of nowhere. The Dragon's mouth, quivering in fear, stuttered to the Evil Dragon, "It is on Earth."

"Earth? That insignificant planet in the Third Portal?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts?"

"On an archipelago in the southern hemisphere. A place called Indonesia."

"Indonesia? But..." Before the Lord could finish his sentence, the fire leapt. The White Dragon's face came under a trance. He stood stiff and upright, no longer trembling. His green eyes flashed. And he began to recite a prophecy that went as follows:

> The Item of Power rests underneath,
> A castle which thou cannot conquer,
> All the power that lurks from the whole Universe
> Cannot defeat the castle's protector,
> Nor can thou beat a dragon faster than light,
> Nor the Wizard that He sent to destroy all your might.
> And thou cannot guess who the protector is,
> For His mighty name is known as. . .

White never finished his prophesy. The Black Lord's eyes flashed like burning coals. He grabbed his scepter and pointed it at White. The scepter flashed and emitted a black lightning bolt.

Suddenly there was an explosion, the darkness mixing with the power of the light, and then a piercing yell from the White Dragon.

****

Jis stepped out of his castle on Krynn and into the bright sunlight. He approached the Blue Landing Pad and looked up expectantly. It would be nice to see the Blue Wizard again. It had been too long for them to be apart. After all, they were best friends. Jis looked up, shading his eyes. Yes, it was definitely him. The Blue Wizard landed and stepped out of the shuttle, arms outstretched. He wore a blue cloak and was very young for a wizard. He had black hair and wise, brown eyes. Only his cloak told you he was a wizard.

"Jis!" he spoke happily. "How nice to see you again! I trust everything goes well on Krynn. Does it?"

The dragon nodded. "It is nice to see you, too, Stuart."

The Blue Wizard looked closely at the dragon's face.

"Wait. Something is wrong. Tell me." Stuart's voice was urgent. He could read the mighty dragon's face like a book.

"Very well. I knew I couldn't hide it from you long. Come to the Conference Room with me."

They entered a big room with a long table and seats. Jis wasted no time and immediately began speaking. "Stuart, as you know, the Items of Power have all been stolen by Dron, The Black Dragon Lord."

Stuart sucked in his breath. He knew this was serious.

Jis continued, "Now, only one Item is left on a planet named Earth."

"Earth?" Stuart questioned. "The planet on the Third Portal, Galaxy Seven?"

"Yes. The Black Lord is now moving towards it. And if he gets there first. . ." his voice trailed off into silence.

"I understand. I will go. Where is it kept?"

"The Southern Hemisphere, Indonesia, on the island of Java, in a city called Jakarta. Search for the castle named Jis."

Stuart nodded. "Anything else?"

"Yes. To defeat the Black Dragons, there are two magical objects you can use: a sword and an amulet. Your dragon, Speartail, will have the amulet and you will have the sword."

He moved his hands in a magical gesture and a sword materialized in front of him. It had a beautiful, blue blade and sparkling red rubies carved in the shape of dragons at the hilt. The scabbard was studded with green gems.

Stuart looked up to the dragon's watchful green eyes and nodded. "When do I leave?"

****

The spaceship came to rest right outside Earth's atmosphere. Stuart would now have to continue the rest of the journey on Speartail because the spaceship's landing on Earth would be too conspicuous.

"Hi, Stuart!" the small green dragon said

jovially. "When are we going down?"

Stuart smiled at the young, active dragon. "Soon. Then you'll be able to show me how fast you can go on this planet,"

"Just as fast as ever!" he said, giving his purple wings a shake.

The shaft opened and they looked down. It was beautiful. The blue sea and the green continents reminded Stuart of Krynn, but he could sense no overwhelming magic from it. It was a delicately balanced planet, everything working together to keep everything alive. It was beautiful.

"Stuart!" the dragon's shout woke him up with a jerk. "You ready?"

Stuart grabbed his sword and leapt onto the dragon's back. Speartail jumped. Into the blue air they flew, soaring and diving like a leaf in a gale. Stuart was breathless. Speartail definitely was fast on this planet. They left the spaceship behind in seconds. Suddenly the dragon shouted, pointing. There is was. Indonesia. Stuart could see many green rain forests and sparkling blue lakes as the islands flashed by—Irian Jaya, Kalimantan, every one better than the last. It was a nice place. He liked it.

They finally approached their destination, the bustling city of Jakarta. They cruised around, skimming the rooftops, but could see no sign of a castle. Suddenly Stuart jumped in amazement. He could see a sign reading *JIS* in bold letters. They approached it and both of them yelled in amazement. It was a school!

****

Stuart jumped off the bus and ran into the school. He needed to protect the castle/school, so he enrolled himself in it. He studied a map of the location of the modules and ran to M-4, the computer lab. He arrived breathless, and inserted the Jis Access Disk into the drive. Stuart pivoted the mouse around and clicked *JIS CASTLE, PLANET EARTH.* A detailed map of the school came up on the screen.

"Hmmm," he said, gazing at the computer intently. "To defeat the Black Dragon, I will need to restore the castle back to its original state. Therefore, I will need to place the Item of Power on the magic portal genesis from Krynn that powers the school. I'll also need the two polarities, the sword and the amulet, to gain access to the item. That's probably here, in front of the Blue Dragon Statue. The genesis would be near the school's false power station, probably a generator."

Stuart was an expert in magic, in all fields. He exited the lab, conjured up a school bag and dusted off his new clothes. (He had needed something up to date because a cloak and pointed hat on a student would arouse attention.) Then he went to his first class.

****

After school, he waited until the school was deserted and walked to the statue of the Blue Dragon. It was probably the school's emblem.

"How ironic," Stuart thought. "The school was founded by a Blue Dragon and the school's emblem is a Blue Dragon." He whistled for Speartail.

He came. "Now," Stuart ordered, "tie your amulet around the statue's neck."

Speartail did as instructed, and the statue's stone eyes began to glow green. Stuart inserted the sword into the statue's outstretched hand and the eyes glowed brighter. Suddenly a panel slid open in front of the statue and a pedestal rose slowly up from it. On top of the pedestal was the Item of Power.

****

It was a beautiful Orb of blue and green, with red radiating off the sides of it. It reminded him of the planet Earth he had seen when they left the spaceship. Stuart quickly took it, put it into his school bag and flew back home on Speartail.

Halfway through school the next day, there was roaring and crashing at the gate. It was time.

Stuart leapt up and ran to the Super Module where the generator was. He entered it and heard the machine jolting and whirring softly. But he was not fooled. He put his hand right through it—it was just an illusion. The generator faded and revealed, behind it, another pedestal, identical to the one in front of the statue. He placed the Orb on it.

Almost immediately, a rumbling occurred . The modules suddenly began to crumble. The students ran out of their classrooms in wild panic, and met a sight they would never forget.

There, through the crumbling modules, turrets rose, made of smooth bricks. The ground split to admit waterfalls and fountains and the ground burst with vegetation.

And just as the Black Dragons were about to destroy the gate, a golden fence of light appeared, blocking their way. They roared and shouted, pushed and heaved, but could not get through. It worked! Stuart jumped onto a platform in front of the bewildered students.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, addressing them all. "I feel it is necessary to let you know a few things. First of all, this place was always a castle only disguised as a school. But this disguise is no longer effective which is why the castle has risen again. But now I need your help. I need people to man the catapults, turret guns, lasers, robots, cannons and the other defense craft. Will you help me?"

This was a chance in a lifetime. An adventure!

"Yes!" cheered the crowd, and the students ran in all directions to find something to do.

Meanwhile, outside the gate, the Lord had been working on a spell. When he cast it, the Light Gates twisted in different directions and the Dragons were able to pass through. They entered the castle but halted immediately. In front of them was a squadron of laser tanks and robots.

Tails singeing, some of the Black Dragons retreated, but again the Lord's magic helped them. The defense robots began to malfunction, going backwards and away from the marching Dragons. All of the other defenses they eluded, too, until they arrived at the Super Module. They approached it quickly, the Lord now confident that he had destroyed the castle's defenses.

But suddenly in a flash of green, Stuart and Speartail appeared. The blue sword swished and electricity ran down it. Ten Dragons fell. Now only the Lord was left. He snarled viciously as the valiant Speartail approached him and the Lord shot him down in a burst of black energy from his scepter.

Speartail fell to the ground, writhing in pain. But, in his last burst of energy, he used the amulet. The amulet's magical power flew high into the sky and Stuart immediately used the magical power of the sword. The two powers intersected and a portal appeared. Then, to everyone's surprise, Jis fell through!

"We're taking you down!". the Blue

Dragon snarled angrily and threw a sap spell at the Black Dragon Lord, which he dodged. The Lord then fired back at Jis, forgetting all about Stuart.

That was his final mistake. Stuart now had a great advantage over his opponent as the Black Lord had forgotten him. So, summoning all the strength he had, Stuart threw the sword. It flew through the air, humming like a hummingbird, and it hit the Lord in the chest.

"Ahhhhhhh!" yelled the surprised beast in pain. He looked at Stuart and Jis with unforgettable hatred in his eyes as he shouted, "I shall return! You can't destroy me! I shall...!" and in a flurry of sparkling dust, the Black Dragon Lord disappeared.

He was gone. The students rushed to the battle site, looking at where the Lord had fallen. They turned to thank their victors, but they, too, were gone.

Stuart glanced at Speartail who was peacefully sleeping, cuddled up beside him. Speartail's arm and wing were in slings. The dragon must have been worn out with his adventures on Earth, but Earth was a nice place, Stuart thought. Maybe he would visit it another time. Stuart smiled. Maybe...Stuart fell into a deep slumber.

Jis, sitting on the opposite side of them in the spaceship, smiled a slow, knowing smile.

"Maybe I will, too, friend," he said softly, looking thoughtfully back at Earth through the porthole. "Maybe I will, too."

Stuart LaBrooy, Grade 7,
attends International School
in Jakarta, Indonesia.



Illustration by Brian Hunter

The Four Seasons

Now here's spring with his baths and showers all watering the earth. It tells you summer must be here. Spring with his blooms and blossoms. Telling you . . .winter . . .is over.

Now comes Mother Sun—she wakes us up and melts our winter blanket of snow. The flowers all wake with the first beams of sun and the world has begun, again.

Now fall falls upon us and tells us winter's near. Fall hits us with her striking colors and yet she's so, so clear. She is close at hand.

The winter months are cold with a blanket of snow over the earth. All the plants are falling, falling, falling asleep along with the world.

—Jasmin Pellegrino, Age 10
Frances Xavier Warde School
Chicago, Illinois



Illustration by Sarah Hunter, Grade 7
Wilbur Wright School, Munster, Indiana

ANIMAL TALK

by Natsuki Iwakami

Thank you for gathering to our theater today. I would like to start the discussion here. Today's topic is 'The Human.' Oh, by the way, I'm the chairman of this meeting," said Owl. "Now, let's begin. Who wants to go first?"

"I will."

"O.K., Mr. Fox."

"My mother has been sick since we moved to the little cave near the highway. It's all because of the exhaust."

"Oh, dear, I hope she gets well soon," said Mrs. Deer. "But my son was killed by a huge truck a few months ago." Then, she burst into tears.

"Humans are such cruel creatures," Mr. Frog grunted. "They do anything for their advantage, but they don't care about us!"

"I agree with that," Miss Sparrow said sadly. "I can't fly these days because of the smog. It makes me sick."

Suddenly, there was a cry of a small animal.

"That's little Squirrel! What's wrong?" asked Mr. Frog.

"I lost my home," answered Squirrel with a tearful voice. "Three humans came and cut down our tree. My parents were killed, too!"

"What?" all the animals shouted. "We can't stand it any more! Let's attack a human's house, everyone. Come on!"

* * *

"Wake up! Dinner is almost ready!"

"Coming, Mom," Emily replied, and called her dog. "Come here, Pepper."

She looked into his eyes and said, "I had a funny dream, Pepper. But it's true that we are ruining nature. I think we should stop it now. Don't you think so?"

And she turned on the air-conditioning.

Pepper sighed softly.

Natsuki Iwakami, Grade 8, attends the International School in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Mom

I wrote a song along the shore,
That reminded me of whom I adore.
The scent of roses, lilacs and mums,
The sound of a melody a woman hums.
A gentle hand to help me through,
Someone by a name you know, too.
Sweet as candy, swift as a dove,
Who has cared for me with all her love.
She is smart as a fox and will understand.
We both like diamonds and, isn't that grand?
But what makes this find just so rare,
Is that she is always willing to share.
A gem of a person, I have no other.
The name of a woman, I simply call, Mother.

—Julie Sufana, Age 11
Elliott School
Munster, Indiana

i ask the Sky

i ask the Sky
"why am i here?"
She sighs and smiles but gives no answer
i ask the Grass
but Its furtive rustling does no good
i ask the Wind
It whispers in my ear but brings no conclusion
i look to the Water
"why am i here?"
i see myself among the Grass and Sky and Trees
waving in the Breeze
the rippling Waves show me the reason–
i understand

—Gayle Howe, Grade 12
Spencer High School
Spencer, Iowa



Illustration also by Julie Sufana

A BUSY REFUGE

by Megan Ronco

Most people would expect a cement and brick porch on the front of a simple house in a small town to be rather cold and uninviting, certainly nothing special, but I think that my Aunt Kay's front porch is very special. It is my favorite place because I find it very familiar and comforting.

There are four cement stairs leading up to the front porch of my Aunt Kay's two-story red brick house on North Chestnut Street in Scottdale, Pennsylvania. There is a child gate blocking the stairway, wooden and painted gray, secured by chains on both sides, preventing the dogs from knocking it over and getting loose, on which the children play only to be told to get off. There is a faded, green awning hanging over the front of the porch, keeping the rain out, allowing people to sit and relax on the porch during a storm, listening to the rhythmic beating of the rain.

The floor is made of dark red tiles and partly covered by a small, gray rug, worn thin, covered with dog hair and cookie crumbs. A gray wooden swing hangs from four metal chains, squeaking with every forward and backward movement, covered by a large, soft pillow; the pillow's flowered covering made by my aunt, and everyone's favorite seat on the porch. Opposite the swing, in each corner of the porch, is a white plastic chair, covered with a pillow matching the one on the swing.

There are many different views seen from sitting on the swing. Looking straight ahead is a parking lot belonging to a funeral home. Generally, the lot is empty, but when there is a funeral the lot is full, not only with cars but also with people, sad-faced, crying, dressed in black. I once was among them, with a tear-stained face, tissues in hand, on the way to my Nana's funeral.

To the left is North Chestnut Street, a much more pleasant view, one of the main streets of town. Many people walk down North Chestnut Street on their way downtown, some waving as they pass, others smiling, some too busy to notice anyone on the porch. Also looking left, I see the old brick road, pale and bumpy, leading up the hill to my grandparents' house. Often I see my Uncle John driving down the pale brick road, stopping at North Chestnut Street, honking and waving with a smile, then turning and heading toward work. Glancing behind me as I sit on the swing, I find myself looking into the sun porch of my aunt's house. The sun porch is usually occupied with little children, playing with toys and blocks or having a tea party, smiling and laughing.

Sitting in the chair closest to the house and looking back over my shoulder, I can also see into my aunt's house. However, this time I see the rust-colored carpet covering the stairway leading to the bedrooms. I also notice that the window is covered with small



Photos courtesy of Kathryn Pritchard



hand prints made by my little cousins and dirty streaks made by the wet noses of my aunt's three dogs. Every now and then, when I am sitting in that chair and turn around to look into the house, I find myself face-to-face with one or more of my aunt's dogs.

Not only do I see many different things while I am sitting on the porch, but I also hear and smell many other things. I hear the voices of my little cousins laughing and talking in the house or the sounds of the television, showing cartoons or children's movies on the VCR. Sometimes, I hear a crash, usually meaning that one of my cousins' towers of blocks has been knocked down, followed by cries or screams from one cousin to the other. I also hear the teakettle's high-pitched whistle and my aunt preparing herself a cup of tea.

Through the screen door wafts the smell of a greasy cheese pizza or pepperoni rolls, hot and fresh, brought home by an older cousin who works at a pizza restaurant. From the back yard comes the sound of my aunt's three dogs barking loudly and ferociously at someone walking through the alley behind the house or at the neighborhood kids who love to stand outside the fence and torment and whistle at the dogs. I also hear the cars as they pass by, some with loud engines, and people walking by and chatting to each other.

Sometimes, I hear lots of change jingling around as the meter maid empties the parking meters which line this side of the street from the center of town to the Presbyterian Church at the end of the block. One rather unpleasant sound I am sometimes unfortunate enough to hear is the thunderous boom of the fire alarm, which can be heard for miles around echoing from the hills, signalling a fire or some other type of emergency.

My aunt's front porch is a spot where I feel very safe and secure. The gate, although its purpose is to keep the dogs and children from running into the street, is like a barrier separating the outside world from me, making me feel protected. I also feel safe because I know there are people inside the house who love me and care for me. Since I only visit during holidays or summer, I don't have things I have to do at home like study or work on assignments for school. This place is somewhere I can go to relax and not have to worry about anything. My job when I am here is to enjoy myself.

Megan Ronco, Grade 9,
attends Munster High School
in Munster, Indiana.

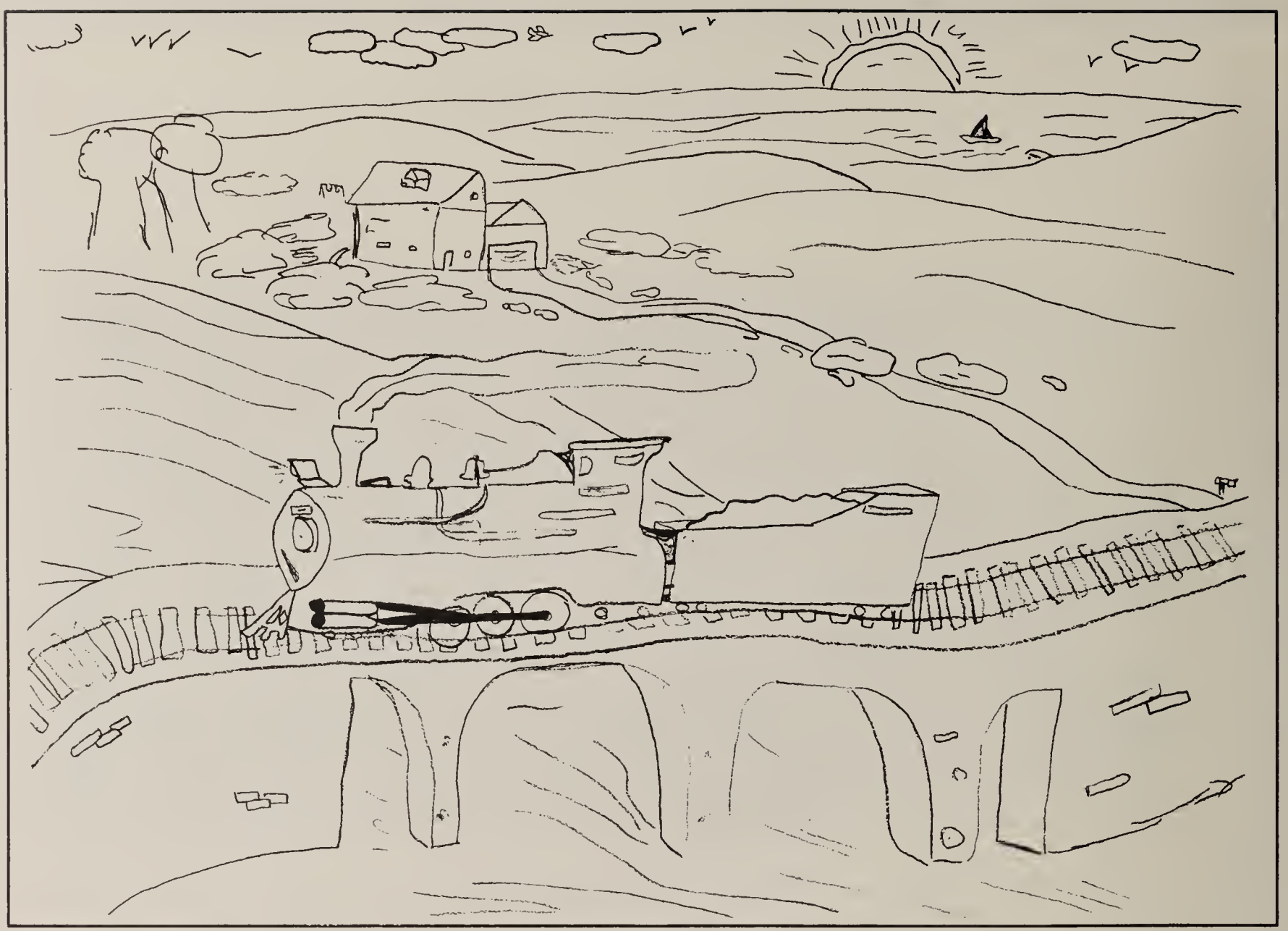


Illustration by Mike Sufana done in 1989 when he was in 3rd grade

HOW CLOUDS CAME TO BE

by Jonathan Juffe

Long ago up on Mt. Olympus, Zeus got tired of doing all the work. He told Uranus, "Bring me a Titan to be my slave."

Uranus went on his way. He brought back a Titan named Cloudius. Cloudius did Zeus' chores for him while Zeus drank wine and fooled around.

One of Cloudius' chores was to sweep the sky. This was the hardest of all chores and he did a good job. But since Cloudius had been extremely overworked, one day he fell into a deep sleep and did not wake up for fourteen weeks and four days. Zeus screamed and yelled but could not wake him up. When Cloudius finally woke up, there were patches of dirt all over the sky. He rushed for his broom, but it was too late! He tried to sweep, but when he swept nothing happened.

Zeus, who had given up on the chores, had been sleeping and eating as usual. When Cloudius yelled to him that the sky was stained black, he woke Zeus. Zeus was in an outrage because Cloudius had awakened him and everything was a mess.

Zeus thundered in rage, "You, Cloudius, must be punished for your wrong doing! I will make you a god! You will be a god—the God of Dirt in the Sky!"

"No, no," shouted Cloudius!

"Yes!" shouted Zeus. "You will sweep the sky every day non-stop forever!"

Cloudius shouted, "Stop! I haven't done anything wrong!"

It was too late. Cloudius had been selected as the God of Dirt in the Sky.

Every day, Cloudius swept until one day he found little birds in one of the patches of dirt. He yelled at them to leave, but they would not. He tried to shoo them out and they cried, and then we had rain. The tears cleaned the clouds. Since there were little nests with baby birds in the clouds, he decided to make all the baby birds cry to clean the clouds. We, on earth, had a flood but the clouds were clean!

Sometimes, Cloudius would fall asleep, and we would have a drought. One day, he decided to name the patches of dirt in the sky. He thought a minute and then named the patches after himself and called them Clouds.

And that's how clouds came to be.

Jonathan Juffe, Grade 6,
attends Cranbury School
in Cranbury, New Jersey.

The Tree

He stands alone.
His huge branches covering half the sky.
His bark is grey and knotted.
Several of his roots stick out of the damp earth.
His leaves make blotchy shadows on the ground.
His brothers were cut down long ago.
He has passed through many seasons of immense changes.
He has many scars of battles he's fought and won.
From the outside he looks old and weary, but on the
inside he is full of strength and power.
The tree stands alone on the top of the hill.
Holding in memories of a lifetime.

—Ben Wilde, Age 12
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Raindrops

A tear for every soldier,
A tear for each man dead.
I lay awake till midnight,
Crying in my bed.
Took a walk in the forest,
Along the River Red.
Took a bath in steaming raindrops,
Raindrops made of lead.
A tear for every soldier,
A tear for each man dead.
Nothing, now, can bring them back,
But something must be said.

—Lisa Schneider, Age 13
Gary, Indiana

Indian Summer

A rebirth
A second chance
In the midst
Of autumn's freezing
There is warmth

A time
To rethink
And try to redo

The sun plays down
From a delicately painted sky
Wiping away
The tears
Of early snow

Rays of happiness
Spread about
Lifting the
Cold season's sorrow
And brightening
Gray
Weary spirits

Allowing hope to grow
As the season of winter
Approaches

—Mollie McDougall, Age 14
Camillus, New York

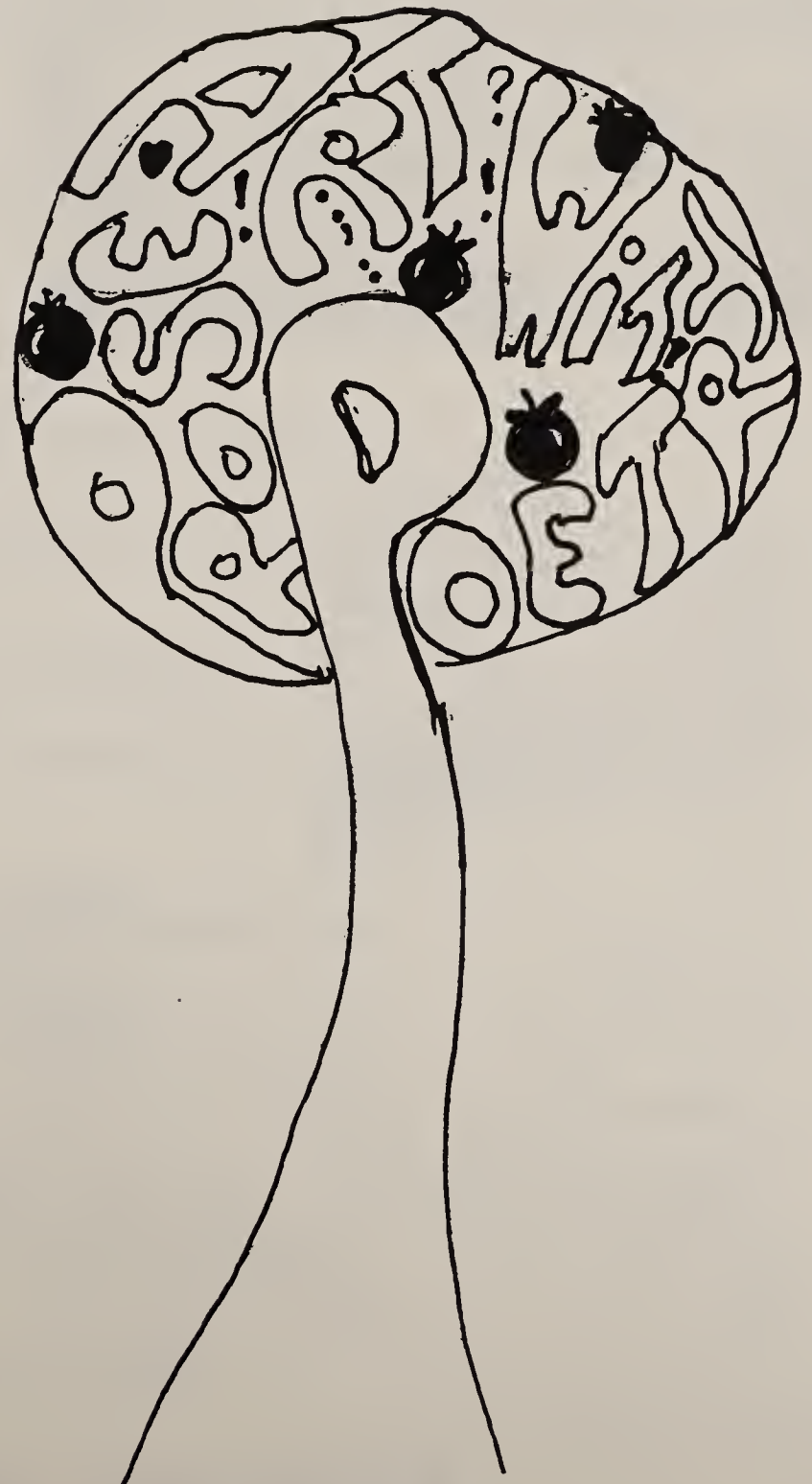


Illustration by Sherry Herbst, Duluth, Minnesota

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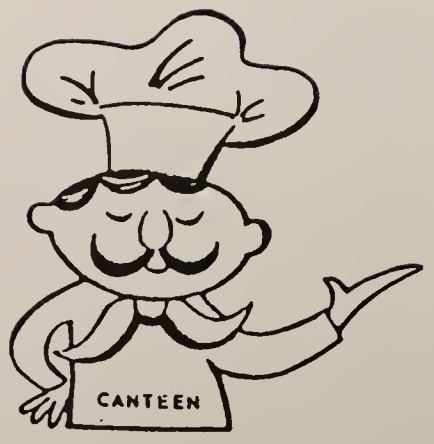
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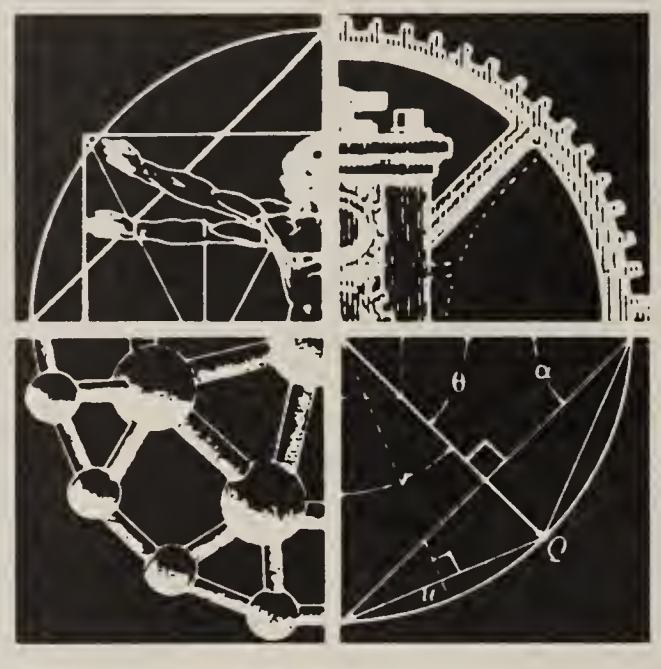
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the sky leaf-gold,
the cricket slow,
the moon
a lost
and ranging rose . . .

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in fat and lighting it,
settlers used it as a
water torch."

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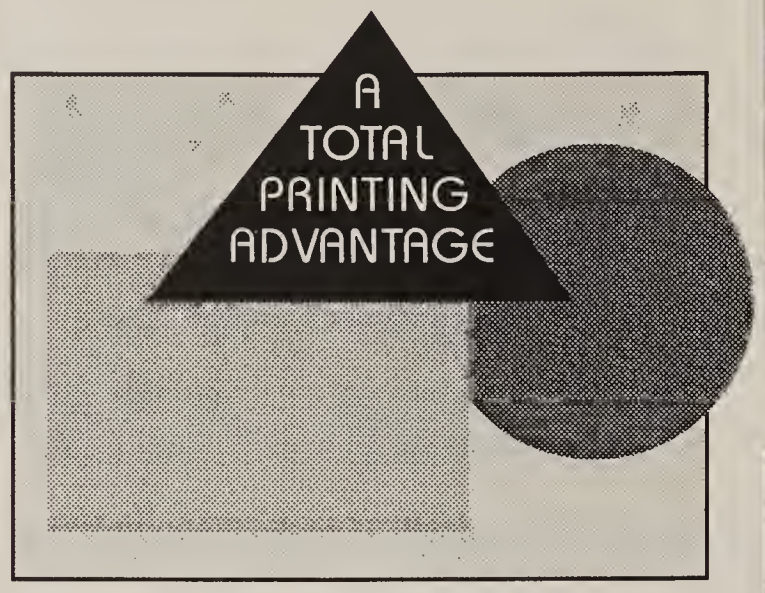
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